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The Never-Ending Academic Dishonesty: An Analysis on The Deterrence of Plagiarism among Students

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Abstract

Plagiarism commonly refers to using one's ideas and information without acknowledging its source. Students prone to plagiarise since the information for the purpose of submitting assignments is easily accessible via books or journals from the library or a much easier platform which is the internet. Lack of writing skills and inadequate training in citing reference of other people's work may lead to plagiarism. These may eventually result repercussion to the university. Awareness of the law and sanctions on the acts of copying others' works without permission might deter the students from plagiarising. To evaluate whether the variables 'knowledge', 'institutional policies' and 'effects of plagiarism' will deter the students from doing such act of copying others' works. The approach taken on conducting the research was based on the responses obtained through an online questionnaire. Finding from the analysis shown that only institutional policies contribute to the deterrence of plagiarism. This study contributes to the literature gap on the methods to deter plagiarism among students and further suggests the implementation of a uniform law together with stricter educational institutional policies.

Keywords: Plagiarism, Intellectual Property, Copyright Law, Awareness, Deterrence, University Students

Introduction

Research studies have shown that plagiarism offers almost similar meaning in its nature. Plagiarism is referring to an act of using someone else's work as one's own work. Malaysian court in the case of *Fauzilah Salleh v Universiti Malaysia Terengganu* [2012] 4 CLJ 601 has defined plagiarism as an act which generally involves taking one's idea without giving a proper attribution or acknowledgment to the original author, and claims the idea belongs to one's own idea (Hayati, et al., 2018). In the same study by Mohamed et al (2018), such reference has also been made to His Royal Highness Sultan Nazrin Shah, the Chancellor of Universiti Sultan Azlan Shah who has described plagiarism as an academic crime and a dishonourable act against knowledge and intellectuals which should be addressed seriously. This research

will employ the definition given by the Malaysian court in the above-mentioned case as an act of manipulating someone's idea or work without acknowledging the real author of that idea or work.

Plagiarism among students is one of the most important challenges faced by the educational institutions. Although plagiarism is not something new in Malaysia and has undergone many improvements in terms of the guidelines and the procedures governing it, this trend has become a serious issue to be tackled by the relevant authorities. Currently, Malaysia has yet to introduce any specific legislation on plagiarism. In this study, it is important to understand that Malaysian laws on plagiarism are mainly based on certain provisions from certain statutes. The administration of plagiarism is governed by the several relevant legislations including the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 (Act 30) and Statutory Bodies (Discipline and Surcharge) Act 2000 (Act 605), the Private Higher Educational Institutions Act 1996 (Act 555), and the Educational Institutions (Discipline) Act 1976 (Act 174). Among all the aforesaid statutes, Act 174 seems to be a comprehensive guideline as it has been dealing with the issue of plagiarism explicitly. This Act describes plagiarism as a disciplinary offence and provides the disciplinary punishments under Rule 48. However, the Act 174 is limited to certain institutions as set out in its First Schedule. Thus, other public and private universities which are not listed in the First Schedule of the Act 174 have to refer to Act 30 for public universities and Act 555 for private universities respectively.

Several studies have been conducted about the issue of plagiarism involving higher education institutions in Malaysia. Previous studies have shown that plagiarism is considered as one of the serious academic misconduct and may affect academic integrity (Yusof & Masrom, 2011; Mohamed et al., 2018; Selemani et al., 2018). Since plagiarism falls within the purview of the respective universities, hence, there is no uniform law governing the issue of plagiarism applicable to all universities and educational institutions in Malaysia. Thus, question arose as to how to deter plagiarism among students. In response to this problem, several studies have suggested for an improvement in reviewing the guidelines or policies pertaining to plagiarism (Awasthi, 2019). Due to the non-existence of a uniform legislation, there should be a proposal for a uniform regulation and policies to curb the issue of plagiarism. Lack of uniformity of rules and regulations has led this research to determine the factors which may deter plagiarism. This will help legislators to formulate and introduce a uniform legislation for the benefits of students and educators.

Literature Review

Deterrence

Frost & Gantt (2004) were of the view that activities through education can create awareness on plagiarism. This is done by requiring specific citation style to be used in their writing. Students should know how to properly cite to honour the original author. The researchers viewed that suspicion of plagiarism is increased if a student's paper does not adhere to the required writing style. It is a method of deterrence to plagiarism.

It was found that detection of the plagiarism can be done in a sophisticated manner provided that every university is willing to conduct a standard comparative analysis of different plagiarism using detection software (Rop, 2017). In Rop's (2017) study, the researcher noted that lecturers believe that Turnitin system improves students' citation and referencing skills.

Thus, it was explained by the researcher that the proposed software was affordable and able to combat the high cost of Turnitin whilst eliminating discrepancies and promoting harmonious plagiarism standard. The researcher also found that the utmost factor which leads to plagiarism is the difficulty in accessing software, lack of awareness, knowledge and skills. By channeling to the proper avenue such as library and adequate promotion on the usage of the software, the number of cases can be reduced. Further, insufficient training could be the barrier to fight the plagiarism.

Glendinning (2014) found that a more serious sanction will have a deterrence effect. Leiste (2020) proposed on the establishment of instructional possible design practices such as Modelling Academic Honesty since deterrence through detection and punishment takes precedence over prevention, despite evidence that detection and punishment are not effective in eliminating academic dishonesty. The model which she introduced is used to identify the approach in teaching issue and teachable moment. It is a form of deterrence by practising to submit the work in phases rather than one final product at the end of the course. Plagiarism can be earlier detected through the writing style. With the method of deterrence, the students' writing and referencing skills can be improved gradually.

Knowledge on Plagiarism

The general knowledge and awareness of plagiarism amongst the university students is still not satisfactory especially in Malaysian tertiary learning institutions where the students need to write academic papers for their assignments using correct citation and referencing rules (Zejno, 2018). According to the research conducted by (Singh & Ganapathy, 2018) shown that there is a greatly alarming number of respondents (90.7%) which indicated that they have never been taught or told about plagiarism, thus the role of university authorities as a reliable source for plagiarism is doubted as 81.1% of the respondents highlighted that university brochures do not assist much in identifying which activity or behaviour constitutes as an act of plagiarism. In the same study, majority of the respondents (68.7%) indicated that the course lecturers have indeed provided information on plagiarism. However, most of them still face problems relating to these rules. Many studies have shown that one of the main reasons of plagiarism among university students is their lack of understanding of the forms of plagiarism and a lack of comprehension to its definition. Furthermore, weak academic writing skills are also barriers to the students' clearer understanding of plagiarism (Zejno, 2018).

From the research conducted by Al-Shaibani et al (2016), the respondent understood that plagiarism is commonly considered as the appropriation of ideas without proper attribution to the original contributor. However, the students were vague regarding paraphrasing and the total number of words that can be copied from the original text before they need to cite as reference. The researchers concluded that Malaysian students lack knowledge on plagiarism and may not be aware that there are many different levels of plagiarism. A study had been conducted by Ali et al (2012) to identify the extent of student's understanding on the concept of plagiarism through the use of computer and information technology. It was found that only 61.5% of the respondent understood the concept of plagiarism and 40% of the respondents thought that copying their friend's assignment, buying assignments from seniors, and making changes to statements without acknowledging the original writers were not considered as plagiarism.

A quantitative research conducted by Md.Yusof & Masrom (2011) on the Malaysian students' understanding of plagiarism found that the students understood the basic concepts of plagiarism and also the concept that copying several sentences from other sources is still plagiarism, but failed to properly refer to secondary citations. Abirami & Kavitha (2019) agreed that plagiarism should be avoided and found in their study that the students' general understanding on plagiarism was unsatisfactory. There was an indication that the students were not familiar with the referencing rules and the students came to know about plagiarism through self-study plagiarism.

Institutional Policies

All the educational institutions play important role to educate students on the strict prohibition of plagiarism. The strict policies related to the rules and regulations of the academic writings must be imposed by the institutions. This policy is very important in order to avoid plagiarism among students and to develop academic integrity in the academic writings (Zejno, 2018) emphasised that these rules and regulations must be imposed by the educational institutions to both students and staff. Therefore, students must be aware on the existence of the institutional policy that prohibit them from plagiarising other person's work. Based on the survey conducted under the research project on the Impact of Policies for Plagiarism in Higher Education Across Europe (IPPHEAE) (Foltýnek & Glendinning, 2015), over half of the students and teachers noticed the presence of policies and procedures related to plagiarism imposed at their institutions. In addition, the result of the research also suggested that all the institutions must proposed better ways of making faculty and students more alert of policies and procedures on plagiarism.

The policies related to plagiarism must be strictly imposed by the educational institutions. Students must be educated with the rules and regulations designed by the institution. Zangenehmadar et al (2015) highlighted that this institutional policy must be comprehensively applied in academic writings to circumvent the plagiarism offences. In order to ensure the effectiveness of the written policy made by the institution, it may be included in the curriculum and student learning task since the students may have access to it. In the same study, Zangenehmadar et al (2015) found that the institutional policy of Swinburne University in Australia has proposed a comprehensive and congruous procedures to deal with plagiarism offences. In relation to the policies enforced in the five top Malaysian universities, the researchers suggested that the details of plagiarism consequences and the level of academic integrity breaches must be clearly stated in the policy. Five important elements in developing the academic integrity policy, namely: approach, access, detail, responsibility and support have been suggested (Bretag et al., 2011, as cited in Zangenehmadar et al., 2015) and these elements may be used to design the academic integrity standards and indirectly can create an understanding related to policies on plagiarism.

Malaysian universities have used many ways in order to educate students on the legal effects of plagiarism. For instance, the use of Turnitin software to combat plagiarism is also important to safeguard the quality and originality of students' works such as written assignment and final year project paper. Various institutions around the world have tested Turnitin software, a web-based software, designed to detect plagiarism and promote novelty in student papers, with end result to promote honest academic writings among students (Batane, 2010, as cited in Al-Shaibani et al., 2016). Most universities in Malaysia have their own policies for the

purpose of deterrence and punishment of plagiarism. In the Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM)'s, through its Institute of Quality and Knowledge Advancement (InQKA), the students and lecturers have been provided with the university's plagiarism policy and Turnitin Training Guide as a measure of deterring plagiarism. The effectiveness of Turnitin is also supported by a research conducted in the University of Botswana where 65% of the students responded that the software would endeavour them to do their assignment appropriately (Batane, 2010; as cited Al-Shaibani et al., 2016).

Effects of Plagiarism

To date, there are many researches which addressed the issue of plagiarism at higher education institutions (Mohamed et al., 2018; Zangenehmadar et al., 2015; Orluwene & Magnus-Arewa, 2020). Those studies help to understand which laws and policies as regards to plagiarism should be improved in Malaysia to cope with this problem as plagiarism offers many disadvantages such as negative effect, lack of integrity and worsen the academic environment (Singh & Ganapathy, 2018). Yusof & Masrom (2011) have conducted a study about Malaysian students' understanding on plagiarism. The authors have pointed out several alarming issues relating to plagiarism and viewed that the level of understanding about plagiarism among Malaysian students is very weak as they tend to commit plagiarism by using different methods. In their study, they found that some of the students may not be aware about the nature and consequences of their actions. Plagiarism may amount to academic misconduct. Further, this issue is getting worse with the growth of online learning system where students are exposed to commit plagiarism easily by using internet. Therefore, educators must play their roles in educating the students about what are the things which may contribute to plagiarism and help students to find for solutions in avoiding plagiarism as plagiarism is not acceptable in academic environment.

Mohamed et al (2018) argued that a clear policy and guideline on plagiarism in universities may help the institutions to maintain their integrity and positive action in producing their task. They opined that those universities and other educational institutions must play their roles in educating students to produce a task with a proper attitude, free from any form of plagiarism. Which may affect the academic community and the integrity of the institutions. The researchers stated that the provisions in the Act 174 with regard to plagiarism are considered as the most comprehensive Act compared to other statutes governing plagiarism. Selemani et al (2018), found that the failure to execute punishments for those students who committed plagiarism may have contributed to the increasing number of plagiarism cases since the students were not scared of the effects of committing a less serious case such as plagiarism since the punishment is lenient and would never affect the student's future.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is divided into two parts. The first part is independent variables consisting of knowledge, institutional policies and effects of plagiarism while the second part is the deterrence as the dependent variable which can be seen in Figure 1 below.

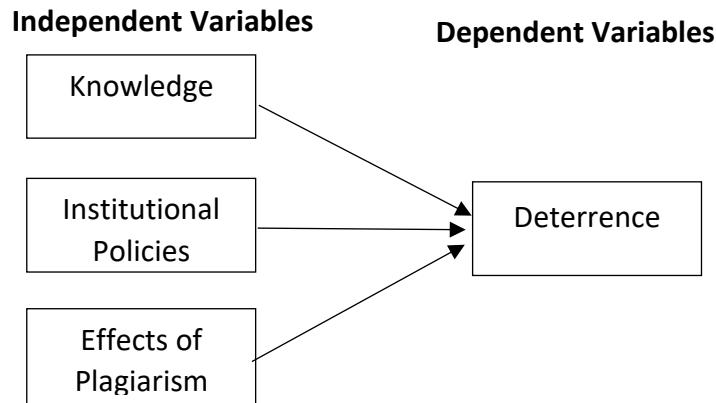


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

Approach

This study was purely quantitative approach where an online survey instrument was given to students of UiTM, Cawangan Negeri Sembilan, Kampus Seremban, Negeri Sembilan. About 85 students responded to the survey which was opened online for two weeks. The questionnaires have 17 items which were divided into five sections. Section A consists of the demographics of the respondents such as gender, age, and the program attended. The items in Section B of the questionnaires have been divided into categories such as knowledge, institutional policies, effects of plagiarism and deterrence. All the items in Section B were assessed using 4-point Likert Scale (1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, 4=Strongly agree). Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 24 was used to analyse the data. The following hypotheses have been formulated for this study:

- H1: There is a significant relationship between knowledge of plagiarism and deterrence.
- H2: There is a significant relationship between institutional policies and deterrence.
- H3: There is a significant relationship between effects of plagiarism and deterrence.

Results

Demographic Analysis

The demographic is presented in Table 1 in the form of frequencies and percentages calculated from the result of the survey.

Table 1. Profile of Respondents

No.	Profile	Male		Female	
		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1	Total Respondent	13	15.3	72	84.7
2	Age				
	Below 18 years	0	0	1	1.2
	18 – 20 years	13	15.3	67	78.8
	21 – 23 years	0	0	4	4.7
3	Program				
	Diploma	11	12.9	54	63.5
	Degree	2	2.4	18	21.2

Table 1 shown this study involved 13 male (15.3%) and 72 female (84.7%) respondents. All of the male respondents were from aged 18-20 years (n=13, 15.3%) while the female respondents mostly aged 18-20 years (n=67, 78.8%), followed by aged 21-23 years (n=4, 4.7%) and only one respondent aged below 18 years (1.2%). Majority of the respondents were diploma students where the male (n=11, 12.9%) respondents were less than the female (n=54, 63.5%) respondent. As for the degree program, only a small number of male (n=2, 2.4%) responded to the survey compared to the female (n=18, 21.2%).

Reliability Analysis

In this research, the data was analysed using Cronbach Alpha in order to test the reliability of the questionnaires. The widely accepted cut-off score is that Alpha should be 0.60 or higher (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Based on table 2, Cronbach's Alpha for knowledge is 0.760 while it is 0.887 for institutional policies. The Cronbach's Alpha for effects of plagiarism and deterrence are 0.601 and 0.791 respectively. Sekaran & Martin (1982) mentioned that the minimum acceptable reliability coefficient level is at 0.60. Hence, all variables in this study were found to be acceptable.

Table 2. Reliability Test Result

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
Independent Variables:		
Knowledge	0.760	3
Institutional Policies	0.887	4
Effects of plagiarism	0.601	3
Dependent Variable:		
Deterrence	0.791	3

Normality Test

Normality test was also conducted to determine whether the data has been drawn from a normally distributed population. The mean and standard deviation of the variable were analysed using the descriptive analysis. All mean scores were above the midpoint of 2.5, ranging from 2.979 to 3.752 (see Table 3). The value of skewness falls within the range of -2.0 to +2.0 to indicate a normal distribution. Based on the result of the normality test, this study fulfilled the assumption of normality.

Table 3 indicates the mean for knowledge (2.979), institutional policies (3.191), effects of plagiarism (3.752) and deterrence (3.180). This showed that respondents were agreeing with the existence of above independent variables (knowledge, institution policies and effects of plagiarism) towards deterrence.

Table 3. Normality Test Result

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Dependent Variables:				
Deterrence	3.180	0.548	-1.054	4.456
Independent Variables:				
Knowledge	2.979	0.580	-0.468	0.944
Institutional Policies	3.191	0.542	-0.463	2.072
Effects of plagiarism	3.752	0.367	-1.840	3.825

Pearson Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation is used to examine the relationship between the three independent variables (knowledge, institutional policies, effect of plagiarism) with the dependent variable (deterrence). Table 4 below shows relationship between the variables and its relationship with deterrence. The variables for knowledge (.019) and institutional policies (.000) shown that those variables were positively and significantly related to deterrence. However, there is no relationship between variable effects of plagiarism (.166) on deterrence.

Table 4. Pearson Correlation Analysis

Variables	Deterrence	Significant
Deterrence	1.000	.000
Knowledge	0.255	.019
Institutional Policies	0.483	.000
Effects of plagiarism	0.152	.166

Significant (p-value 0.05)

Source: SPSS Analysis

Regression Analysis

A test on regression was further conducted to strengthen the views on relationship and identification of variables that have impact on the deterrence of plagiarism. Based on the multiple regression test in table 5, less than 50% of the variance in deterrence can be explained by the independent variables (knowledge, institutional policies, and effects). In other words, the independent variables only explain 23.5% of the variability of the deterrence which shown that only one variable which is “institutional policies” significantly related to deterrence. Thus, the hypotheses H1 and H3 are rejected, and the study only accept hypothesis H2.

Table 5. Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	F	Sig.
1	.485 ^a	.235	.207	.48808	8.309	.000

		Coefficients ^a							
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Results	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
	(Constant)	1.460	.581		2.512	.014	.303	2.616	
H1	Knowledge	.033	.104	.035	.319	.751	-.174	.241	Rejected
H2	Institutional Policies	.466	.113	.461	4.128	.000	.241	.690	Accepted
H3	Effects of plagiarism	.036	.151	.024	.240	.811	-.264	.336	Rejected

a. Dependent Variable: Deterrence

Source: SPSS

Discussion

Educational institutions play a major role in providing guidelines and policy to curb with the student's plagiarism. Knowledge of non-citing of other people's works can be considered as plagiarism is insufficient to deter plagiarism as can be seen in the analysis that it does not has a significant relationship with the deterrence of plagiarism. The result of the mean of 2.979 which is within the scale of disagree shown that the respondents have little knowledge of what tantamount to plagiarism. In fact, knowing the effects of plagiarism also have no significant relationship with deterrence.

Introduction of software such as Turnitin might help to combat plagiarism. It may reduce the possibility of copying other people's work. However, the software alone might not be able to safeguard original authors. This study shown that the variable institutional policies is positively and significantly related to the deterrence of plagiarism. Educational institution has role to educate students and lecturers to a successful academic writing without plagiarism. The introduction of policy by InQKA of UiTM leads to the subscription of Turnitin software that has been expanded to all of UiTM's faculties. Recently, UiTM has introduced a new system called 'Ouriginal' for the use of its staffs and students. This shows the seriousness of higher education institution such as UiTM in safeguarding the originality and quality of students' works. The regression analysis yields valuable insight to seek a better allocation of resources to curb plagiarism among the students. A uniform law and good institutional policies may help to deter such act.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Considering the huge impacts of plagiarism among students, a proper and systematic guideline is significant in assisting educational institutions to curb the issue of plagiarism. As such, a thorough internal institutional policies help to ensure smooth process of managing plagiarism issues, hence deter the students from committing an act of plagiarism. Based on this study, institutional policies can help to deter plagiarism. Equally important, this study contributes to an understanding of the critical needs of having a uniform law with regards to plagiarism which have not been explored in-depth by legislators. In this context, the implementation of a uniform law in the country together with stricter educational institutional policies can help to achieve the deterrence of plagiarism. With this in mind, this issue has to be addressed seriously as it helps to provide an appropriate solution for problems relating to plagiarism. The findings of this research will be beneficial to various institutions and parties apart of enhancing the awareness and knowledge pertaining to plagiarism among students. This study recommends further research to be done on the provisions that should be included in the uniform legislation which meant for deterrence of plagiarism.

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