

FACTORS ASSOCIATED TO PLAGIARISM ACTIVITIES AMONG UNDERGRADUATES OF UITM SEREMBAN 3

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ABSTRACT

The rising numbers of plagiarism in students' academic work warrant attention from the education authority. Plagiarism is referring to the academic dishonesty which involves copying others work without using proper citation and failing to acknowledge the original author. The tendency to commit plagiarism can be associated with the factors of pressure, lack of awareness and personal attitudes. This study is aimed at identifying the relationship between lack of awareness, pressure, and personal attitudes to students committing plagiarism. The respondents are the final year undergraduates from three faculties in UiTM Seremban 3. The findings of this research showed that a weak positive relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable. This study concludes that pressure has a stronger relationship with students committing plagiarism compared to lack of awareness and personal attitude.

Keywords: *Plagiarism, Student, Awareness, Pressure, Personal attitudes*

INTRODUCTION

Students are potentially the main group in the academics involved in plagiarism activities. This is due to them having to produce academic work as an assessment of their academic ability. The failure of students to cite accurate information may affect the quality of their academic work. Consequently, the integrity of students' academic work is increasingly threatened by discoveries that it is not originally theirs (Cabe, 2005). This took place due to students may have resorted to an easy way out, which is plagiarise others work. As a result, the issue of plagiarism has raised serious questions on academic integrity (Chapman & Lupton, 2004; Gallant, 2008) and indicate the seriousness of plagiarism danger (Lin & Wen, 2007). The situation is disconcerting as number of plagiarism cases in institutions of higher learning around the world

increased at an alarming rate (Kwong, Man, Pan, & Wong, 2010). Malaysia too is not spared from it (Md Yusof & Masrom, 2011; Wan, Md Nordin, Halib, & Ghazali, 2011). Academic institutions have continuously highlighted the issue and planned strategies to reduce plagiarism among their students and researchers (Ramzan, Munir, Siddique, & Asif, 2012). Therefore, identifying the factors associated to students' plagiarism will give a useful insight in tackling the issue in Malaysia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty. Palmquist (2003) defines it as unintentionally using others effort without appropriately acknowledging the origin of the idea or intentionally copying others work and admitting it as his own. The definition categorised plagiarism into intentional and unintentional action. Intentional plagiarism is committed under the perception that the lecturer is unable to detect plagiarism from many of their students' work (Yeo, 2007) or the lecturers do not care that their students committed plagiarism (Wan et al., 2011). On the other hand, unintentional plagiarism claimed ignorance as the reason leading to unintentionally copying others works (Song-Turner, 2008). Even so, unintentional involvement in plagiarism does matter (Rosnow & Rosnow, 2008). This is because plagiarism carries serious implications. In the long run, graduates who are inadequately trained will pose a threat to the public safety, welfare and financial decisions to which they advise (Gullifer & Tyson, 2010).

Previous studies on plagiarism have identified several contributing factors. A study by (Love & Simmons, 1998) highlighted the factor of lack of awareness. The lack of awareness occurs with the lack of exposure or information about plagiarism (Stappenbelt & Rowles, 2010). This is because awareness of plagiarism is only emphasised when students have reached the tertiary education. Consequently, students faced the difficulty to determine what plagiarism are (Ryan, Bonanno, Krass, Scouller, & Smith, 2009). When students are not clear about plagiarism when carrying out academic assignments, a large percentage of them did not realise that a "cut and paste" activity is a serious plagiarism offence (McCabe, Trevino, & Butterfield, 2001). In order to tackle plagiarism, it is important to consider students' awareness on university academic integrity and plagiarism as it can determine approaches towards combating plagiarism (Ramzan et al., 2012).

Personal attitude is another factor that has been associated with student's perception on plagiarism (Hu & Lei, 2015). One of the attitudes is fearlessness. A study on accounting students in Malaysia found that students do not fear of getting caught for

committing plagiarism (Smith, Noorlaila, & Siti Fatimah, 2007). This indicates that the personal attitude has a significant association with students committing plagiarism (Salleh, Idzwan, Alias, Hamid, & Yusoff, 2013). Besides that, plagiarism occurred due to students' negative attitude. The attitude constantly involved laziness (Tshepo, 2010) and poor time management (Lim & See, 2001). In another study carried out by Bichler-Robertson, Potchak, and Tibbetts (2003), it was found that students with lower self-control have the tendency to be involved in cheating activities.

Another variable that has been found to contribute to plagiarism is students' lack of competence. Students who are involved in plagiarism activities are people who are found to have inadequate academic ability (Wilkinson, 2009). This inadequacy is illustrated by their lack of knowledge in citing works used as reference materials (Smith, Noorlaila, et al., 2007). Students' lack of competence in finding academic resources subsequently explains their involvement in the activity without knowing that plagiarism is an academic offence. The lack of competence is not helped by the fact that the Internet presents an easy way out. A study by Scanlon and Neumann (2002) found that accessibility of internet resources caused plagiarism among students. This is supported by Selwyn (2008) who found that 60% of undergraduate students of higher educational institutions in the UK admitted committing Internet based plagiarism in the last one year.

Plagiarism among students also occurred due to pressure. One of the pressures is students' fear of failing (Council of Writing Program Administrators, 2003). McCabe and Drinnan (1999) stated that pressure in maintaining good grades could make them cheat in their task. Cheating is perceived as not wrong due to time constraint to complete assignments and achieving good grades (McCabe & Drinnan, 1999). Time pressure and assessment weighting are also found to be positively related to likelihood of plagiarism in an experimental study (Koh, Scully, & Woodliff, 2011). Besides that, excessive number of assignments given (Comas-Forgas & Sureda-Negre, 2010) and under pressure to pass due to financial constraint (Zobel & Hamilton, 2002). The pressure is higher with students who have low grade point average students which lead to the tendency to plagiarize (Lambert, Hogan, & Barton, 2003; Sheard, Dick, Markham, Macdonald, & Walsh, 2002).

According to Tayraukham (2009) the fear of failure has led students to plagiarism activities because they believe that it is the only way to pass the course. This is strengthened by the fact that many students do not have much experience about the academic practice on plagiarism. This is illustrated by more than half the students

surveyed do not recognize clear examples of plagiarism despite having a plagiarism policy (Roig, 1997). Most of the researchers found out that the student knowabout the plagiarism policy but did not know that their work is a misconduct (Ryan et al., 2009). The university students howeverblamed their committing plagiarism on the universities and faculties failure in creating a good culture of intellectual integrity (Pritchett, 2010).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study conceptual framework as shown in Figure 1 was adapted from Smith, Ghazali, and Fatimah Noor Minhad (2007).Lack of awareness, pressures and personal attitudes were chosenas the independent variables after some modifications were made. Meanwhile, the dependent variable is students committing plagiarism.

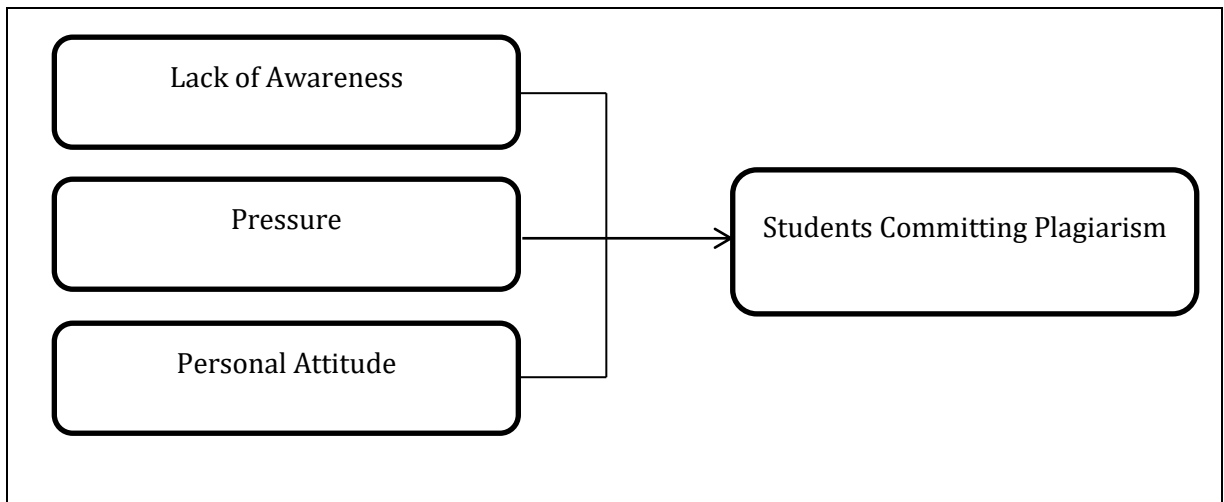


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

METHODOLOGY

This study applies a quantitative method and adopts across-sectional survey.By using a cross-sectional study, the data was gathered by a one-time survey (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010).The respondents are the final year (Semester 5, 6 and above) undergraduates in three different faculties in Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Seremban 3 (S3). The faculties are Faculty of Administrative Science & Policy Studies (FSPPP), Faculty of Sports and Recreation (FSR) and Faculty of Computer Science & Mathematics (FSKM).The unit of analysis is individualfromthe final year undergraduates in UiTM Seremban 3.

The sample size was determined based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table. For an overall population of 1,223 students, the sample size required is 297. The sample is selected based on a probability sampling. A simple stratified random sampling technique is used due to the difference in composition of final year students of each faculty. The population of the students is first divided into segments, thereafter subjects are drawn in proportion to the original numbers in the population (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010).

The instrument used was a structured questionnaire. Most items were adapted from Smith, Noorlaila, et al. (2007) and Caruana, Ramaseshan, and Ewing (2000). A few of the items are self-developed. The questionnaire consists of items measuring awareness, pressure and personal attitude of the students. The items are scored using the Likert scale range from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). This correlational study aims to point out the relationship between the variables.

Table 1: Respondents Sampling

Faculty	No of population	No of respondents
FSPPP	810	198
FSKM	298	74
FSR	115	28
Total	1223	300

A pilot study was conducted on thirty (30) second year Statistics undergraduates. A pilot study is conducted to establish the reliability of the research instrument and to evaluate feasibility and suitability of the actual research (Chua, 2013). From the feedback, minor changes were made to the original questionnaire to ensure the respondents can clearly understand the questions. Self-administered questionnaires for the actual data collection were distributed to the undergraduates from three faculties in UiTM Seremban 3. The data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 23.

FINDINGS

Discussion of the data analysis is based on the results of the questionnaire conducted onto 300 respondents. The descriptive analysis showed the majority of the respondents are female with 213 (70%) whereas the male are much lower with 87 (29%). Age wise, students of 22 years old are the highest number of respondents with 152 (50.7%), 70 (23.3%) 21 years, 64 (21.3%) 23 years old and only 14 (4.7%) above 24 years. The biggest faculty in S3 campus have the highest respondents, 186 (62%)

followed by FSKM with 86 (26.7%) and finally FSR with 28 (9.3%). Students from semester 5 formed the majority with 164 (54.7%), semester 6 with 120 (40%) and semester 7 and above with 16 (5.35%). The Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of the respondents represented by the majority from 3.00-3.49 with 140 (46.6%), followed by 2.50-2.99 with 84 (28%), 3.50-4.00 with 44 (14.7%), 2.00-2.49 with 29 (4.7%) and finally below 1.99 with 3 (1%). The following Table 2 summarises the demographic profile of respondents.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Respondents

No	Profile	Frequency	Percentage
1	<u>Gender</u>		
	Male	87	29
	Female	213	71
2	<u>Age</u>		
	21 years old	70	23.3
	22 years old	152	50.7
	23 years old	64	21.3
	Above 24 years old	14	4.7
3	<u>Faculty</u>		
	FSPPP	186	62
	FSKM	86	28.7
	FSR	28	9.3
4	<u>Semester</u>		
	5	164	54.7
	6	120	40
	7 and above	16	5.3
5	<u>Current CGPA Score</u>		
	Below 1.99	3	1
	2.00 - 2.49	29	9.7
	2.50 - 2.99	84	28
	3.00 - 3.49	140	46.6
	3.50 - 4.00	44	14.7

All constructs indicate a coefficient Alpha above 0.7 and this shows that all of the items are reliable and can be used (George and Mallery (2003)). An assumption of normality was fulfilled to enable a correlation analysis. The normality distribution can be observed through Skewness and Kurtosis between +/- 2 that indicate all variables normally distributed (Hazman, 2016) as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Normality of the Distribution

No	Variable	Skewness	Kurtosis	Assumption
1	Lack of awareness	.010	-.089	Normal
2	Pressure	.196	-.379	Normal
3	Personal Attitude	-.191	-.512	Normal
4	Students committing plagiarism	-.061	-.133	Normal

In determining the correlation between the first variable, lack of awareness indicate that there is a positive significant value but the relationship between the two variables is weak ($r = 0.183$, $p < 0.05$) as shown in Table 4. Thus, lack of awareness is significant towards student committing plagiarism as p-value below 0.05 and the value is positive. Previous studies had shown that there was a positive significant between lack of awareness and students committing plagiarism (Smith, Ghazali, et al., 2007).

Table 4: Correlation between Lack of Awareness and Students Committing Plagiarism

Variables	Pearson(s)
Lack of Awareness (IV)	Students Committing Plagiarism (DV)
Pearson Correlation	0.183**
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001
N	300

The result of pressure indicates that there is a positive significant value but a weak relationship ($r = 0.239$, $p < 0.05$) as shown in Table 5. Pressure is significant towards student committing plagiarism as p-value below 0.05 and the value is positive. This result reinforced the findings by Love and Simmons (1998) and Koh et al. (2011) that pressure is recognized as a related factor in the likelihood of plagiarism.

Table 5: Correlation between Pressure and Students Committing Plagiarism

Variables	Pearson(s)
Pressure (IV)	Students Committing Plagiarism (DV)
Pearson Correlation	0.239**

Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
N	300

The result on personal attitudes found a positive significant value and weak relationship between personal attitudes and student committing plagiarism ($r = 0.232$, $p < 0.05$) as shown in Table 6. Therefore, personal attitude is significant towards student committing plagiarism as the p-value below 0.05 and the value is positive. This concurs with the findings by Salleh et al. (2013) that proved personal attitudes positively correlated to plagiarism.

Table 6: Correlation between Personal Attitudes and Students Committing Plagiarism

Variables	Pearson(s)
Personal Attitudes (IV)	Students Committing Plagiarism (DV)
Pearson Correlation	0.232**
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
N	300

DISCUSSION

The result for the first objective indicates that there is a tendency of lack of awareness to be related with students committing plagiarism. This positive relationship means that when students lack of awareness on plagiarised work, the tendency to commit plagiarism is high. This supports Rosnow and Rosnow (2008) finding that, lack of awareness by copying original author's work is a problem that leads students committing plagiarism.

Pressure faced by the students is from preparing for tests, catching up with deadline of assignments and projects. At the same time, they must try to complete the task well so that they can achieve good grades. However, when students find the pressure is too overwhelming such as assignment weightage (Koh et al., 2011), excessive number of assignments (Comas-Forgas & Sureda-Negre, 2010) they may have desperately opted the easy way out which is to plagiarise. This reinforces what has been found by Love and Simmons (1998) on Master's students in American public universities that students plagiarize when under deadlines pressure. This is where the university should pay the most attention to. This is due to the varieties of pressures that are faced by the students. Hence, universities must be able to identify the pressure and assist students in tackling them by offering strong support group.

This study's finding concurs with the study conducted by Salleh et al (2013) that personal attitude has a significant association with students committing plagiarism. Whereas Smith et al (2007) conclude that personal attitude is one of the factors that contribute to students committing plagiarism. Personal attitude of students varies due to their individual behaviour such as laziness (Tshepo, 2010), fearless of being caught (Smith et al, 2007) and poor time management (Lim & See, 2001). The multiple personal factors contributing to plagiarism activities among students is complex. The university has the obligation to offer help such as providing programs and friendly students' centres to help out with students' problems.

CONCLUSION

As this study was conducted on single campus of only one public university, it limits wider targeted respondents. Therefore, future research may take up the rest of the variables as highlighted by Love and Simmons (1998). The other variables that contributed to plagiarism activities are lack of competence, internet facilities and institution can be tested in future research involving bigger students' population. Prevention is better than cure hence the university should consistently promulgate plagiarism awareness to clearly inform the students, lecturers and faculties that plagiarism is an offence that has long term repercussions.

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