

Factors Affecting the Plagiarism Behavior of Faculties in Maharashtra

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to determine the impact of awareness, knowledge, and attitude toward plagiarism on the plagiarism activity of college teachers in Maharashtra State, India. Two hundred seventy-two college teachers within Maharashtra State, India, participated in the survey. The study used purposive and snowball sampling techniques. The college teachers have a reasonable awareness and moderate knowledge of plagiarism. The college teachers bore a positive attitude toward plagiarism. The results of multiple regression analysis showed a significant influence of all three independent variables on the plagiarism activities of college teachers. Attitude towards plagiarism was forecasted as the highest predictor of plagiarism activities of college teachers, followed by knowledge of plagiarism.

Keywords: Knowledge; Awareness; Attitude; Plagiarism; College teachers; Maharashtra

1. INTRODUCTION

Plagiarism is when someone claims another person's words, ideas, or works as their own¹. Of late, plagiarism has become a buzzword in the academic community. Academic publishing is supposed to be free from such activities which come under academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty is a broad area that includes all forms of cheating, putting false facts and figures, altering the academic documents², presenting false documents, and many more. The existence of academic dishonesty is discernible in society in different forms³.

Plagiarism is one of the categories of academic dishonesty. In the academic world, plagiarism appears in two forms⁴ - the first one result from ignorance. A person may need to gain proper knowledge of attribution when he cites others. While in the second case, it is purposeful borrowing without proper acknowledgment. Any activity that does not give credit to the original author comes within the purview of this approach. Here, the act of plagiarism becomes dangerous. University Grants Commission⁵ (UGC), as per UGC Act, 1956 has directed to watch over the excellence of higher education in India. It has made a regulation entitled University Grants Commission (Promotion of Academic Integrity and

Prevention of Plagiarism in Higher Education Institutions) Regulation, 2018. It is applicable to students, teachers, research scholars, and all those who are working in higher education institutions in India. It is very necessary for the stakeholders of the academic world to understand this regulation's significance. The institutes and universities in India need to enact the regulation effectively so as to get the desired results. This is going to shape and change the attitude and perception towards plagiarism of the students, teachers, and researchers.

There have been numerous instances of plagiarism and fraud by the faculty members, which are well documented⁶. The previous studies have tried to study the perception and related issues of plagiarism considering the students or research scholars as a target population⁷⁻⁹. However, very few studies point out their attitude, awareness, and knowledge of plagiarism. The present research investigates the factors affecting the plagiarism behaviour of faculties in Maharashtra to fill in this information gap.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A few previous studies attempting to study the behaviour of faculty members toward plagiarism have been reproduced below:

Ewig¹⁰, *et al.* studied teachers and students perceptions of plagiarism in health sciences education. The students said they could know about the university plagiarism

policy through course syllabi, program student handbook, and university student handbook. The faculty members perceived plagiarist activities were more frequent among the students than their self-reported behavior. Citing the full text by reading only the abstract was the most commonly self-reported plagiaristic behavior. They tended to submit information from the website as a part of the original work.

Kwong¹¹, *et al.*, in their investigation, found that the teachers and students did not share standard views on the concept of plagiarism, and the former was more indulgent and exhibited plagiaristic behavior. The students felt that the common reasons to conduct an act of academic misconduct were the pressure to get a higher grade in an exam, excessive academic work, and a lazy attitude. The faculty members mainly did not report the cases of plagiarism and preferred to tackle them in their manner. Bettaieb, Cherif, Kharrouki, and Mrabet¹² found that the faculty of Medicine in Tunis seemed to accept plagiarism if others committed it. They also needed better comprehension of plagiarism, as half of the respondents approved of copying a line or two to get ideas for future writing⁷. However, they knew that plagiarism is something other than what is accepted in the academic set-up. According to most respondents, self-plagiarism should not be the object of punishment. The senior faculty members were less tolerant of plagiarism than their junior ones. Those who thought themselves excellent in English showed little acceptance of plagiarism.

Sankar¹³ assessed the attitude towards plagiarism from Arts and Science colleges from Coimbatore of South India. Through his study, he learned that the faculty members had no hesitation to plagiarize if the document's author approved of copying the content. A heavy work schedule and short deadlines provided an excuse to plagiarise the content. Some of the faculty members also thought it would not harm the university's prestige, and plagiarism could be defensible if one has more severe compulsions. They also thought that self-plagiarism was not punishable. Some teachers also thought borrowing the content would be unethical if they knew some field. If everybody is committing the act of plagiarism, then there is nothing wrong with following the same path.

Lei & Hu¹⁴ investigated the perception of 112 English teachers at Chinese universities towards plagiarism. The authors revealed that the teachers who received education in foreign lands had a deeper understanding of many types of plagiarism and unsuitable referencing than those who had received their entire education in China. All the participants considered poor academic performance and a negative attitude as probable reasons for plagiarism. However, the overseas-trained teachers did not accept this fully. Moreover, they held a more censorious attitude toward plagiarism.

Michalak¹⁵, *et al.* surveyed to assess the perception of plagiarism of faculty members from a private college in the United Kingdom. Although the definitions of plagiarism varied, they were indicative of what constituted plagiarism at the university level. Around 56 % of

faculty members tried to explain plagiarism in syllabi, while 87 % of faculty members said that they discussed plagiarism in their classes. They did not invite librarians for information literacy instruction on plagiarism.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary purpose of this research is to assess the impact of three factors, viz., awareness, knowledge, and attitude towards plagiarism, on the activity of plagiarism among college teachers in Maharashtra State, India. This study strives to address the following research questions:

- Whether awareness about plagiarism among college teachers affects their plagiarism activity?
- Whether knowledge of plagiarism affects the plagiarism activity of college teachers?
- Whether attitude of college teachers towards plagiarism affect their plagiarism activity?

4. HYPOTHESIS FORMULATION

4.1 Awareness of Plagiarism

The cognitive ability of a person to perceive, understand, and judge a particular phenomenon is referred to as awareness¹⁶. Awareness about plagiarism in this study's context is the familiarity with the attributes of plagiarism. Awareness is knowing or being conscious of events or objects. According to Idiegbeyan-ose, Nkiko, and Sinulu¹⁶, the level of about plagiarism will affect researcher's involvement in plagiarism. If the researchers do not understand what constitutes plagiarism, it will not be easy to prevent plagiarism¹⁷. The previous studies¹⁷⁻²³ have evaluated the level of awareness about plagiarism among researchers and students. With this backdrop, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H1: There is no impact of awareness about plagiarism on college teachers' plagiarism activity.

4.2 Knowledge of Plagiarism

Information is defined as facts, information, and skills gained via experience or study. It constitutes the theoretical or practical comprehension of a subject⁷. Dorji²², Kumar, and Mohindra²⁴, Bašić²⁵, *et al.*, Ibegbulam and Eze²⁶, Hu and Lei²⁷ have studied the knowledge of plagiarism among researchers and students. Based on the above literature, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H2: There is no impact of knowledge of plagiarism on college teachers' plagiarism activity.

4.3 Attitude Owards Plagiarism

The degree to which an individual has a favorable or bad judgment of a specific behavior defines as the attitude toward executing the behavior. It is a person's positive or negative feelings towards engaging in a behavior²⁸. Many of the earlier studies conducted by Sankar¹³, Hosny and Fatima²⁹, Smith, Ghazali and Minhad⁷, Salehi and Ghasemzadeh³⁰ and Rozar²³, *et al.* have traced attitudes of students or researchers towards plagiarism.

Based on the above literature, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H3: There is no impact of attitude toward plagiarism on college teachers' plagiarism activity.

5. METHODOLOGY

5.1 Sampling

A sample survey of college teachers was conducted to collect the relevant data. The data were collected from 272 college teachers in Maharashtra State, India. The sample is comprised of college teachers working in aided and non-aided colleges in different parts of Maharashtra. Regular, ad-hoc, and teachers working on a clock-hour basis were included in the survey. The college teachers belonging to arts & humanities, science, engineering and technology, commerce & management, and interdisciplinary subjects constituted the sample of this study. The college teachers teaching at undergraduate and postgraduate levels were also considered in the sample. Table 2 gives information on sample characteristics. The researchers carefully identified the college teachers working in various colleges within Maharashtra to consider them in the survey justifying the selection of purposive sampling. Further, the teachers who responded to the survey were also requested to provide a few references of their colleagues to include in the survey, which justifies the selection of the snowball sampling technique.

5.2 Measure

A well-structured questionnaire was prepared to collect the primary data on the chosen constructs. 'Agree-disagree' five-point Likert Scale was used for measuring 'attitude towards plagiarism' and 'plagiarism activity' constructs. A five-point scale of 'not at all' to 'to great extent' was used to measure 'awareness' and 'knowledge' of plagiarism. The reliability measure 'Cronbach's alpha' for all the constructs is presented in Table 1. It was found to be larger than the threshold of 0.7 for all the constructs. All the indicators were adapted from prior research studies. The list of indicators and their sources are presented in Annexure I.

5.3 Data Collection

The questionnaire designed by the researchers was transformed into a Google survey form. The form link was then posted in various WhatsApp groups and individual WhatsApp windows of the lecturers in Maharashtra.

Table 1. Alphas, means and SD of the constructs

Construct	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha
Awareness about plagiarism	3.54	1.23	.937
Knowledge of plagiarism	3.15	1.24	.957
Attitude towards plagiarism	3.72	1.21	.769
Plagiarism activity	3.97	1.08	.911

They were requested to fill up the survey forms by making telephone calls. References of other lecturers in the contact of the lecturers already surveyed were also gathered, and the link was also shared with them. The lecturers working in different colleges in Maharashtra were called personally, and the researchers requested them to post the Google form link in their respective college WhatsApp groups. The researchers also visited a few colleges personally and filled out the forms from the lecturers available there.

Table 2. Profile of the samples

Characteristic	Choices	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	135	50%
	Female	137	50%
Discipline	Arts & Humanities,	55	20%
	Science Eng. &	116	43%
	Technology	27	10%
	Commerce & Mgt.	46	17%
	Interdisciplinary	28	10%
Type of institution	Aided	146	54%
	Un- aided	126	46%
Level of teaching	Under- Graduate	103	39%
	Post- Graduate	128	49%
	Both UG & PG	32	12%
Employment status	Approved/regular	187	69%
	Ad hoc	37	14%
	CHB (Clock-Hour)	48	18%
Attended training on plagiarism	Yes	130	48%
	No	142	52%

6. RESULTS

The authors did data analysis by performing multiple linear regression analyses to assess the impact of awareness, knowledge, and attitude toward plagiarism on the plagiarism activities of college teachers.

Table 3 shows the correlation coefficients of all three independent variables with plagiarism activity. All three independent variables, viz awareness about plagiarism, knowledge of plagiarism, and attitude towards plagiarism, were positively and significantly related to plagiarism activity.

The results show a significant influence of all three independent variables on the plagiarism activities of college teachers ($F= 62.162, p < .05$) with $R^2 = .41$, suggesting that the listed factors predict 41 % of the variation. The

Table 3. Correlation coefficients of independent variables with plagiarism activity

Independent variables	Correlation coefficient with plagiarism activity	Result
Awareness about plagiarism	0.424	Significant
Knowledge of plagiarism	0.424	Significant
Attitude towards plagiarism	0.587	Significant

Table 4. Factors affecting plagiarism activities of college teachers

Factors affecting plagiarism activities of the college teachers	Regression coefficient	t-value	Sig.
Intercept	17.163	8.563	.000
Awareness about plagiarism (X_1)	.071	.810	.419
Knowledge of plagiarism (X_2)	.195	3.069	.002
Attitude towards plagiarism (X_3)	.864	9.690	.000
R ²	.41	-	-
Adjusted R ²	.404	-	-
F	62.162	-	.00
N	272	-	-

estimated plagiarism activity score is equal to 17.163 + .071 (Awareness about Plagiarism) + .195 (Knowledge of Plagiarism) + .864 (Attitude towards Plagiarism).

The results of hypothesis testing are summarised below:

The result of H1 is found to be insignificant ($t = .81$, $p > .05$). The null hypothesis is accepted at a .05 significance level. Therefore, it is interpreted that there is no impact of awareness of plagiarism on the plagiarism activity of college teachers. H2 is rejected at a .05 significance level ($t = 3.069$, $p < .05$). It shows the significant impact of knowledge of plagiarism on college teachers' plagiarism activities. The result of the third hypothesis, H3, is also significant ($t = 9.69$, $p < .05$). It shows a significant impact of attitude towards plagiarism on college teachers' plagiarism activities.

Attitude towards plagiarism was the highest predictor of plagiarism activities of college teachers ($\beta = .493$, $t = 9.69$, $p = .00$), followed by knowledge of plagiarism ($\beta = .224$, $t = 3.069$, $p = .002$). The results show that the third independent variable, 'awareness towards plagiarism,' did not affect the plagiarism activities of the college teachers ($\beta = .061$, $t = .81$, $p = .419$).

7. DISCUSSION

The previous literature reflected the studies that measured perception towards plagiarism and other factors affecting it. The previous literature conducted studies to measure perception towards plagiarism and other factors affecting the plagiarism behavior of different target populations. Comparative studies conducted in the past were related to understanding the differences in awareness and knowledge about plagiarism about various demographic characteristics. This study, however, aims to assess the impact of awareness, knowledge, and attitude toward plagiarism on plagiarism activity among college teachers in Maharashtra State, India. This study

follows Salehi and Ghasemzadeh²², who confirmed that attitude towards plagiarism, has a significant positive relationship with the intent of plagiarism and a significant relationship exhibited between negative attitude and purpose of plagiarism. The result of this study also shows that there is a positive and significant relationship between attitude and plagiarism activity. The result of the study by Smith, Ghazali and Minhad⁷ provided evidence that Malaysian undergraduate accounting students had engaged in plagiarism activities to a lesser extent. The result of the current study is similar in that aspect.

Kumar and Mohindra²⁴ revealed that law research scholars possessed knowledge concerning the various issues of plagiarism in the digital environment. This study also reported a reasonable extent of awareness about plagiarism among college teachers. However, the findings of Idiegbeyan-ose, Nkiko and Sinulu²³ reported that PG students were fundamentally aware of plagiarism. The study by Kumar and Mohindra²⁰ reported the poor attitude towards plagiarism among researchers. Incidentally, the results of the current study are different from this study. The current study reported a favorable attitude of college teachers towards plagiarism. The study of Oyewole, Rasheed, Ogunsina¹⁶ and Kumar and Mohindra²⁰ also reported a reasonably good understanding and awareness of plagiarism in academia. These results are consistent with the findings of this study. Oyewole, Rasheed and Ogunsina¹⁶ reported that distance learners assured that they appropriately acknowledged their sources of information. This result also matches the finding of this study.

8. CONCLUSION

The study assesses the impact of three determinants of plagiarism activities of college teachers, viz., awareness about plagiarism, knowledge of plagiarism, and attitude towards plagiarism. It revealed that 48 % of college teachers attended training programs on plagiarism, and 52 % never attended any training program on plagiarism. The results indicate a reasonable awareness and a moderate knowledge of plagiarism among college teachers. The college teachers bore a positive attitude toward plagiarism. It is evident from the study that the college teachers did not engage in plagiarism activity.

The three factors viz awareness, knowledge, and attitude towards plagiarism positively and significantly impact plagiarism activity at a .05 significance level. Attitude towards plagiarism showed the highest predictor of plagiarism activities of college teachers, followed by knowledge of plagiarism. The results show that awareness of plagiarism' did not affect the plagiarism activities of the college teachers.

This research study has evaluated the impact of only three independent variables on college teachers' plagiarism activities. The study was confined to understanding the plagiarism activity of college teachers in Maharashtra State only. Future studies could involve other determinants of plagiarism activity of college teachers so that more

information on this topic can be explored in detail. Future investigations may include other target groups to understand plagiarism activities in various geographic areas.

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Annexure I. Measurement scales and their sources

Construct & Alpha	Indicators	Supporting literature	
Awareness about plagiarism (AP)	I know the meaning of plagiarism		
	I am aware of the constituents of plagiarism		
	I am aware of the penalties for the detection of plagiarism	Smith ⁷ , <i>et al.</i>	
	I know, plagiarism is an academic crime	Oyewole, Rasheed and Ogunsina ¹⁷	
	I know, plagiarism is an act of lack of integrity		
	I am aware of the consequences of plagiarism	Dorji ²²	
	I am aware of the guidelines rendered by UGC with regard to plagiarism	Added by the researchers	
	I understand how to avoid committing plagiarism	Yasami and Yarmohammadi ³¹	
	I know how to properly acknowledge the authors through citations	Rozar ²³ , <i>et al.</i>	
Knowledge of plagiarism (KP)	I know how to cite various sources	Dorji ²²	
	I understand the originality report generated by plagiarism software	Kumar and Mohindra ²⁴	
	I know how to check plagiarism		
	I know the software used to check plagiarism		
	I know the citation style used in my discipline		
	I know the extent of similarity index accepted by the publishers	Added by the researchers	
	I know the difference between citations and references		
	Attitude towards plagiarism (ATT)	I like the idea of plagiarism checking	
		I will not like to plagiarize	
I do not see individuals who plagiarize as serious-minded people		Oyewole, Rasheed, and Ogunsina ¹⁷	
I think, it is right to give authors credit for their work			
I think the act of plagiarism is unethical		Honsy and Fatima ²⁹	
I think, the people in my profession take plagiarism seriously		Added by the researchers	
Plagiarism activity (PA)	I possess good research skills (Ref:07)		
	I take efforts to reduce the extent of plagiarism		
	I am confident to draft plagiarism free document	Smith, Ghazali and Minhad ⁷	
	I try to develop my own ideas		
	I do not intentionally plagiarize	Oyewole, Rasheed and Ogunsina ¹⁷	
	I will make sure I give acknowledgment which is due at all times		
	I sometimes have difficulty in paraphrasing someone else's ideas	Yasami and Yarmohammadi ³¹	
	I am concerned about the level of plagiarism in my research documents		
	I check plagiarism level of my research documents before submitting it for publication	Added by the researchers	
	I have committed plagiarism in the past unknowingly		
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