

Beyond Academic Dishonesty: Investigating the Higher Students' Knowledge and Experience Committing Plagiarism

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ABSTRACT

The issue regarding plagiarism, a kind of academic dishonesty act, continue to be a worldwide concern. This study then examines the higher students' knowledge and experience of committing plagiarism. This study adopted descriptive quantitative research using the survey method—the collection data stage using an online questionnaire by involving 1.286 students of IAIN Bone as respondents. The findings of this study indicate three categories of students' knowledge and understanding about plagiarism; 4.1% of students are not familiar with plagiarism terms, 95.43% of students already knew what plagiarism in term is. However, they have partially understood this issue. Plagiarism is regarded as totally taking someone else's work or copying another's original ideas without crediting the source; 0.47% of students are familiar with plagiarism terms and understand this issue adequately. Furthermore, there are three categories about their experience committing plagiarism; 4.74% of students did not realize that plagiarism is an improper action, 7.47% of students have a partial understanding about this issue, so they are unsure whether they had ever committed plagiarism or not, while 87.79% students still frequently engaged in plagiarism notwithstanding they realized that plagiarism is academic dishonesty. In conclusion, most students have general knowledge about plagiarism but no in-depth understanding of this issue. Most of them committed plagiarism, even though they know that plagiarism is an academic crime.

Keywords: *academic dishonesty; plagiarism; higher students*

1. INTRODUCTION

Academic dishonesty and unethical academic behavior issue continue to be a worldwide concern. Plagiarism, one of the most common forms of academic misconduct, has recently been a significant problem globally for the academic environment [1]. Plagiarism has been categorized, over the past decades, as a multi-year phenomenon on academic dishonesty that occurs in higher education [2]. Plagiarism may be defined as literary theft of someone else's works or ideas and claiming them as one's own without appropriate acknowledgment to the source [3]–[5]. In the context of students' dishonesty behavior in higher education, plagiarism could be performed in any attempt, especially those related to academic writing assignments such as papers, research reports, or essays.

The increasing plagiarism issue in the academic environment is related to many factors. The development of digital information may be considered a marked contributor to the increasing plagiarism issue. The rapid rise of the use of the internet accelerates the decline in academic ethics [6], [7]. The current technological

sophistication allows students to access any information through the internet easily. Students turn to the internet to find solutions and shortcuts for writing assignments. Students easily copy and paste these references making them, intentionally or not, engage in plagiarism.

Students at Indonesian universities experience such problems, IAIN Bone, as well. Based on the initial interview, NH, RR, WS (students of Education Faculty) confessed that the instant way to make a writing assignment is googling, copying, and combining some ideas from the internet. They also claimed that all these ways had been familiar and acceptable methods to finish the bunch of assignments in a short time instantly.

It is essential to reinspect how students understand plagiarism issues regarding this problem. Since someone's understanding of plagiarism is highly correlated to their behavior about this issue, one of the influencing factors engaging higher students to commit plagiarism could be that students do not clearly understand what constitutes plagiarism [8]. On the contrary, sufficient understanding may make them aware and strive to avoid plagiarism.

There has been much previous research concerning plagiarism among higher students. Several studies have investigated how university students' and staff understand plagiarism [9], [10], the experience of plagiarism detection in higher education [11], [12], potential causes of plagiarism [13], [14], and practical strategies to prevent plagiarism conduct [15]–[17]. However, a limited study is available that provides investigation about the relation between the higher students' knowledge, particularly students of Islamic higher education, about plagiarism and their experiences committing plagiarism. This study then aims to examine students' knowledge and understanding about plagiarism issues and how their experience to engage in this unethical academic behavior.

2. METHOD

This study adopted descriptive quantitative research using the survey method. The survey method systematically gathers data from the population through direct observation. The primary source of data and information is obtained from respondents as research samples. The population of this study is all active students of IAIN Bone which is roughly 8.912 students. These students were distributed in four faculties and twelve departments. Then 1.286 students belonging to all-four faculties in IAIN Bone were comprised as respondents or sample research in this study. The sampling technique adopted stratified random sampling. This method was conducted to ensure that different faculties, departments, and batches of students in the population are equally represented.

The data collection techniques employed the online questionnaires through a google form. The questionnaire used in this study involves two general question topics concerning students' understanding of plagiarism and students' experience committing plagiarism. The questionnaire contained some types of questions. The combination of closed-ended questions, open-ended questions, categorical questions (dichotomous and checkbox questions), and Likert scale questions with a four-point scale was used to measure the respondents' opinions, thoughts, or attitudes towards the given questions or statements. Before collecting the data, all those questionnaires were validated by two validators to ensure their validity. Besides, the questionnaire was reliable based on the interpretation of Cronbach's alpha value at 0.783.

The collected data from questionnaires about students' knowledge and experience committing plagiarism were then descriptive-quantitatively analyzed using Microsoft Excel 2019.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Result

3.1.1. Higher Students' Knowledge and Understanding about Plagiarism Issue

This study delineates information about students' knowledge about plagiarism issues, precisely, how they understand plagiarism terms and form/types of plagiarism or what constitutes plagiarism and their recognition of plagiarism commit. There are some noticeable findings of students' knowledge about the plagiarism issue. The most general information to gather in this study is about respondents' familiarity with the plagiarism term. A more detailed look, as illustrated in figure 1, illustrates this concern. To begin with, the pie chart in Figure 1 depicts that less than 5% of whole respondents acknowledge do not become familiar with plagiarism terms. At the same time, 1.233 out of 1.286 students (95.88%) are adequately familiar with the term plagiarism. The latter respondents were then asked some follow-up questions, including their knowledge and understanding of the plagiarism issue. Some of those comprise students' knowledge about the form and types of plagiarism and plagiarism detection software.

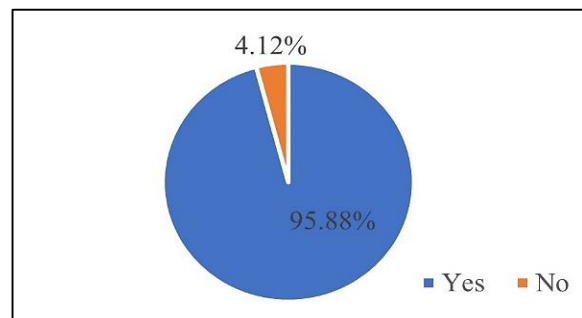


Figure 1. Students' Familiarity towards Plagiarism Term

Regarding whether they knew the form of plagiarism or not, about 15.25% of the 1.233 respondents admitted that they are pretty familiar with such a term, notwithstanding they did not know the form of plagiarism. The rest, more than 80% of students already knew and selected at least one form of plagiarism that they were familiar with. In addition, when they were asked about the plagiarism types, most of the respondents had similar responses. Copying and plagiarizing other people's work without any credit was pertained as a form of plagiarism that almost all respondents knew well.

There was minimal idea from respondents regarding what constitutes plagiarism. Most students did not consider paraphrasing others' writing without proper citation as a plagiarism act. Patchwriting and copying some phrases/ sentences/ paragraphs and combining them to create a new passage without citation were likely not categorized as academic misconduct as well. Complete plagiarism and direct plagiarism are the only two acts examined as plagiarism by most respondents in this

study. Furthermore, it is interesting that most students (6.37%) did not realize that copying some parts of their work without attribution or proper citation could be categorized as plagiarism. The detailed information was figured out in the following Table 1.

Meanwhile, the percentage of students who have sufficient knowledge and understanding about plagiarism

is meager. In particular, only six respondents (0.47%) could evince more comprehensive information about plagiarism. They were satisfactorily familiar with several forms or types of plagiarism: direct plagiarism, total or complete plagiarism, authorship plagiarism, auto plagiarism, verbatim copying, and partial plagiarism.

Table 1. Percentage of Students Examining Some Misconducted Acts as a Plagiarism

No	Types of Acts	Percentage of Students Considering as a Plagiarism (%)
1	Total/ Complete Plagiarism (Taking a manuscript or work that someone else created and claiming in your name)	100
2	Completely copying or plagiarizing some parts of other people's work as its original without crediting the source	99.45
3	Rewriting some parts of other authors' work with no changes, but with citation	4.32
4	Rewriting a significant part of your work or study without attribution	6.37
5	Paraphrasing others' writing without any proper citation	27.87
6	Copying some phrases/sentences/paragraphs from other authors' works and combining them to create a new passage without citation	7.75
7	Copying someone else's work or other authors' writing and making minor changes with no credit	8.95
8	Taking figures/maps/tables or other statistical data from other someone else's work without citation	32.47
9	Patchwriting some parts of other authors' manuscripts without crediting the source	6.37

3.1.2. Higher Students' Experience Committing Plagiarism

Figure 2 illustrates three general response categories about students' experience committing plagiarism. Some students admitted that they had no idea about plagiarism and did not even realize that plagiarism is improper. There were 61 students in this group. Additionally, approximately 7.47% of those were unsure whether they had ever committed plagiarism or not. This is mainly because they do not know any acts categorized as plagiarism. While others, nearly 90% of the respondents acknowledge having committed plagiarism, even though they clearly understand that plagiarism is an unethical academic act. Most of the respondents in this category confess to repeatedly 'copy-pasted' or plagiarizing others' writings from the internet without proper citation.

Table 2. Students' Reasons to Commit Plagiarism

No	Reasons	Percentage (%)
1	The wide availability of digital information (internet)	94.25
2	No strict rules and punishment from lecturers for the plagiarism	87.24
3	Lazy to think. Having 'copy-paste' of someone else's work is the easiest way to complete the assignment	85.69
4	Lack of understanding about the plagiarism issue	70.68

It is an exciting finding that most students acknowledged committing plagiarism even though they knew it was an academic crime. Further information reveals that the plagiarism act is possibly motivated by some leading causes. Several major reasons leading students to commit plagiarism are then presented in the following Table 2.

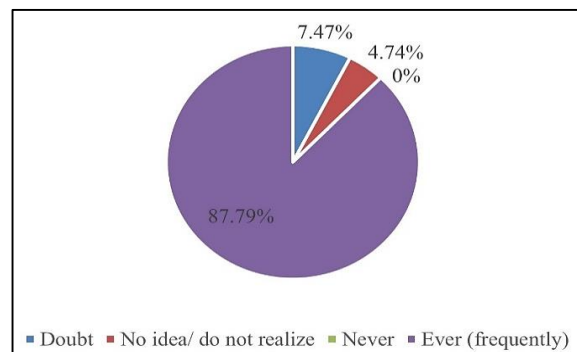


Figure 2. Students' Experience Committing Plagiarism

3.2. Discussion

3.2.1. Higher Students' Knowledge and Understanding about Plagiarism Issue

Based on some findings, this study reveals three categories of students' knowledge about plagiarism. On the one hand, some students are still not entirely familiar

with the term for plagiarism. Although its proportion is considerably low (Figure 1), this is a pretty surprising finding because the higher students, as academics who frequently deal with academic writing and cite others' ideas, are supposed to be aware of plagiarism issues.

On the other hand, most respondents were familiar with plagiarism term. More than 90% of students already know what plagiarism is; however, most have general knowledge and no in-depth understanding of plagiarism. On the contrary, a low proportion of students have adequate knowledge and understanding about this issue. The majority of students were familiar with the term. Nevertheless, this term familiarity was not followed by sufficient knowledge, and they partially understood the plagiarism issue.

This partial understanding refers to a misconception about students' knowledge of plagiarism. The most noticeable misconception is how students define plagiarism. Plagiarism is regarded as plagiarizing or copying another's work or original ideas without crediting the source. Complete plagiarism and direct plagiarism are the only two types of misconducted acts considered plagiarism. They solely assume that the only common plagiarism form is completely doing 'copy-paste' other's writing as the original way without any acknowledgment or even taking a manuscript or work that someone else created and claiming in his/her name.

Some relevant arguments from previous studies also affirm this finding. Mustafa claimed that students' knowledge of plagiarism was deficient [18]. Most students were unaware of various misconduct acts representing the characteristics of plagiarism [9]. Yeo, in his study, also revealed that most students provided adequate knowledge to define plagiarism, but their understanding about actions constituting plagiarism was varied and tended to be inaccurate [19]. Only copying an assignment without citation and internet cut-and-paste was categorized as severe plagiarism by the observed higher students.

Furthermore, it is worthy to note that students likely have misconceptions concerning paraphrasing plagiarism. Based on the provided data (Table 1), one of the remarkable findings is that paraphrasing is likely considered the proper way to avoid plagiarism. Most students consider paraphrasing with or without citation does not constitute plagiarism.

It is interesting to see that from three kinds of acts mentioned related to paraphrasing (Table 1): copying some phrases/ sentences/ paragraphs from several other authors' works and combining them to create a new passage, copying someone else's passages, and making minor changes, and patchwriting some parts of other authors' manuscript, most students failed to identify those three acts as the kind of plagiarism. The student did not consider 'no credit, no acknowledgment, or citation' anymore to examine those acts as plagiarism forms. They assumed that the acknowledgment of original text was

not needed to put anymore when the copied text has already changed, even in a minor way. The minor changes could be made by paraphrasing, using synonyms, reordering the words, reforming the sentence, or combining phrases or sentences from several sources to structure a new passage. This sort of way was identified as the standard way to avert engagement in plagiarism. Most students' perception is categorized as a misconception. Paraphrasing someone else's writing/work by altering some of the words, the order of the words, or the structure of the sentences, without due acknowledgment of the source is the act of plagiarism [9].

Another kind of students' misconception is related to citation or crediting the source. Students innocently considered that total copying some part of others' writing from the internet without any change but with citation could not be categorized as plagiarism. The majority of students failed to identify this kind of act as plagiarism. They assumed that if they cited the original text source correctly, it would be free from plagiarism [18]. Copying other authors' work might be accepted as long as they make a proper citation. For example, when they copied a few sentences or even a whole paragraph of someone else's writing from the internet and followed by crediting the source and putting quotes to make a direct quotation, then they have entirely avoided plagiarism.

Those conditions could undoubtedly be considered a misconception or partial understanding of plagiarism. This study briefly reveals that most students poorly understand plagiarism, mainly what constitutes plagiarism. Singh and Ganapathy, in their study, also claimed that a significant proportion of higher students still have a superficial knowledge and understanding of plagiarism [9]. The lack of knowledge and insight about plagiarism drives them to understand partially. A widespread partial understanding of the plagiarism concept indeed leads students to engage in plagiarism easily. It has been avowed that plagiarism is motivated by a poor understanding of the plagiarism concept [18].

Several previous studies have revealed that one of the primary reasons students engage in plagiarism is the lack of proper understanding of plagiarism [20], [21]. Students may commit plagiarism unintentionally due to the lack of understanding and awareness about plagiarism [22]. Students are not aware that what they have been doing constitutes plagiarism. This is mainly because they have not been sufficiently informed and educated about plagiarism, mainly what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid this misconduct properly.

3.2.2. Higher Students' Experience Committing Plagiarism

Committing plagiarism, which could be categorized as a severe form of ethical misconduct, is inadmissible for any reason. However, the finding of this study reveals that the proportion of students who frequently commit plagiarism is noticeably significant. In detail, there are three categories about students' experience committing

plagiarism; some students did not realize that plagiarism is an improper action, some others were unsure whether they had ever committed plagiarism or not, while a majority of students acknowledge still frequently engaged in plagiarism.

A point to note is that most students realize that plagiarism is academic dishonesty. However, they confessed that they were still frequent to commit this act. Four points were significant reasons for this issue; the easy access of digital information through the internet, no strict rules and punishment, laziness to think, and the lack of understanding about the plagiarism issue.

The rapid development of digital information might be considered a marked contributor to academic dishonesty, including plagiarism [6], [7]. The Internet offers much easiness to access various formats of resources, leading to the easiness of plagiarism occurring [23]. Other reasons beyond the academic dishonesty proposed by Eastman et al. [24] are the lack of motivation, the lack of time in doing an assignment, laziness to think, and seeing that plagiarism has a low negative impact (low risk of getting caught, everyone could do the behavior, feels no one is hurt or harmed with this act, or no strict sanctions or punishments when committing it). In addition, the lack of understanding highly contributes to what constitutes plagiarism becomes one of the main reasons for plagiarism [18], [20], [21], [25].

4. CONCLUSION

To sum up, there are three categories of students' understanding of plagiarism. Some students are not familiar with plagiarism, and very few understand this issue adequately. While most others simply have general knowledge about plagiarism, there is no in-depth understanding of this case. Almost all the respondents in this study have already known the term plagiarism. However, students' familiarity with its term and other general information does not help avoid plagiarism. This lack of knowledge causes a partial understanding, which easily plagiarizes students. Even though they know well that plagiarism is an academic crime, most students commit plagiarism. This is mainly because of four primary reasons: easy access to digital information through the internet, no strict rules and punishment, laziness to think, and the lack of understanding about the plagiarism issue.

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