RESEARCH ARTICLE

PLAGIARISM: THE MAIN REASONS FOR ITS WIDESPREAD USE AMONGST STUDENTS THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK BEHIND STUDENTS' PLAGIARISM

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ABSTRACT

With the development of the Internet and the abundance of sources available to students, plagiarism has become more prevalent and widespread in the academic community. There are now a number of special software recognition programmes which can detect academic misconduct and plagiarism. Many scientific studies have been conducted investigating the possible reasons behind why plagiarism is being employed more readily by students. The afactors and therefore it is a complex system. Research states that there are five elements which can result in undergraduate student's plagiarism. These are known as the five 'S's: Student, Supervisor, Syllabus, System, and Society. Each of these elements affects the student in one way or another either negatively or positively and can lead to academic dishonesty. This research tries to review these studies to consider the reasons that motivate student plagiarism and ultimately to create a framework which empowers decision-makers and educators to prevent students plagiarising during their university studies.

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INTRODUCTION

It is necessary to clarify the meaning of plagiarism before verifying its causes as the Oxford English Dictionary has defined plagiarism as: **"The practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own"** (Oxford Reference Online). The term plagiarism stems from the Latin **"plagiarus meaning kidnapper, it is an apt metaphor for the academic offence of the theft of another scholar's work and its representation as one's own"**(Walker, 1998).

Aspects and Sources of Plagiarism

Howard stated that, much falls under the umbrella term of plagiarism and it can be intentional or unintentional (Howard, 2001). This dishonest behavior is cheating and very dangerous as it can result in serious consequences. Park indicated that the fraudulent action of copying from other's writing may be older than the writing itself (Park, 2003). Therefore, plagiarism is not a new phenomenon but it has become more widespread amongst the university population (Selwyn, 2008, Park, 2003).

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This has increased concerns about the spread of plagiarism and the increase of academic dishonesty (Selwyn, 2008). Plagiarism corrodes academic integrity because it is the deceptive practice of taking someone else's efforts such as words, ideas and theories and passing them off as your own work. As Selwyn stated plagiarism can occur in a variety of forms such as students copying work from academic sources such as journal articles, books or lectures without adequate acknowledgment of the source (Selwyn, 2008). However, it is not only written texts that can be plagiarized but it couldbe printed and non-printed materials whether tables and figures, or, maps, images, computer software, arts, writings, films, theory. Additionally, there may be published or unpublished sources such as: books, scientific researches, journals, worksheets, thesis, and unpublished materials such as memos, lectures, speeches, unpublished thesis papers which can be plagiarized (Starovoytova & Namango, 2016). Therefore, many researchers, including Ashworth, have argued that understanding the student's perspective on cheating and plagiarism can greatly help academics in their efforts to communicate appropriate standards and raise levels of academic integrity (Ashworth *et al.,*., 1997). Therefore, researchers and educators should investigate further into the subject of plagiarism and recognize it in order to educate

students and help them avoid this trap. Other researchers found that some students purchase the assignments from online research services or through specialized offices (Zobel & Hamilton, 2002; Howard, 2001; Wilhoit, 1994) that sell assignments for high prices or even sell them to more than one person. Such assignments are often composed from unknown or non-existent sources and therefore one doesn't know whether the content is correct or not.

Forms of plagiarism

With the rapid advancement of Information and Communications Technology, the Internet offers a wide range of information that is accessible anytime hence providing more opportunities for copying and pasting other people's publications than ever before, and it is therefore likely that more students engage in unethical behavior (Howard, 2001; Chen & Chou, 2017; Selwyn, 2008). Studies have found many forms of plagiarism engaged in by studentsincluded: copying of text from sources without appropriate acknowledgement (Selwyn, 2008; Zobel & Hamilton,2002; Howard, 2001; Wilhoit, 1994). Using assignments written by others (Selwyn, 2008). This behaviour often occurs in a group of friends, as Zobel & Hamilton discovered students may help each other thinking that it is a humanitarian action (Zobel & Hamilton, 2002) but they do not know that such help falls under plagiarism. Furthermore, this harms the friends by depriving them from actually learning and then being reprimanded when plagiarism is discovered. lagiarism includes copying other works whether part or all of the work **"words or ideas"** Selwyn, 2008; Bennett, 2005; Wilhoit, 1994). Copying material without proper citations, such as paraphrasing or not distinguishing between the researcher's ideas and the student's ideas, adding quotation marks in the wrong place are all also classed as plagiarism (Howard, 2001; Wilhoit, 1994**)**. This can occur due to the weak writing ability of students or their lack of understanding concerning academic referencing/ presentation. Students can forget to write references or add incorrect or non-existent references, which also results in plagiarism.

Reasons for plagiarism

Perception of plagiarism amongst students differs depending on their culture. Hence, this affects many scholarships and study abroad missions. Therefore, an academic institution should look into the students' perceptions, who are studying at these institutions in order to explain to them the features and dangers of plagiarism. This reason appeared in Cleary's 2017 research and other recent studies, cultural differences indicate perceptions of plagiarism are varied depending on the background and experiences of each student (Cleary, 2017; Wheeler, 2009; Gu & Brooks, 2008; Zobel & Hamilton, 2002). In addition, students' perceptions of plagiarism may vary according to professions. The results of Chen & Chou's 2017 research study revealed that most students with an Arts or Communication major held relatively adverse thinking toward plagiarism (Chen & Chou, 2017). The subject of plagiarism can be attributed to the student, their motivation to achieve and develop their academic abilities in their field of study and their knowledge and desire for education and honesty.There are factors attributed to the professor, their interest and awareness of the issue of plagiarism and keenness to deliver their knowledge to the students. As well as the method of transmitting and marking assignments a professor should

provide accurate and constructive feedback when discussing assignments with the students. Other incidences of plagiarism can be attributed to the syllabus and its suitability to the student, contemporary issues, labour market and the quality of curriculum construction affects the student directly. Additionally, some researchers state that the university system or society impacts on student's honesty. University students come from different schools, countries and cultures with diverse societal pressures and values. Ashworth *et al.,*, clarified that some students plagiarise accidentally because the meaning of plagiarism is not clear (Ashworth *et al.,*.,1997). Therefore, no one can know if the student plagiarised intentionally or not, unless the University announces their policy and procedures from the outset of each course and makes sure that all students understand.

Factors associated with students

Iindividual differences are a key factor in this area. A number of studies indicated various causes of plagiarism regarding students these include, but are not limited to: laziness (Cleary, 2017; Wilhoit, 1994); desire for a higher grade (Wilhoit, 1994) pressure/stress of coursework (Chen & Chou,2017; Cleary, 2017). Poor time management is also a contributing factor (Cleary, 2017; Ashworth *et al.,*. 1997; Wilhoit, 1994). Lack of knowledge of correct citation methods (Chen & Chou,2017; Wilhoit, 1994). Deficiency of understanding plagiarism (Starovoytova & Namango, 2016). Students copy because they think should repeat what the experts said (Cleary, 2017). Some students fear asking the lecturer for help as they think this will be interpreted as a sign of stupidity (Zobel & Hamilton, 2002). There may be underlying family and societal pressures (Devlin and Gray 2007). Some students may be unaware of the conventions of formal academic writing (Chen & Chou, 2017; Devlin and Gray 2007) or even just honest confusion could lead to plagiarism (Wilhoit, 1994). Perhaps the student was unaware of the rules concerning citations (Cleary, 2017). Easier access to the Internet makes cheating easier than before for undergraduate students (Chen & Chou, 2017; Selwyn, 2008; Howard, 2001). Being asked to do new types of work and study may result in students looking online for guidance (Cleary, 2017). Some students plagiarize because they know they won't be caught (Cleary, 2017; Starovoytova & Namango, 2016). Some students believe if the information is in the public domain this means it does not belong to any one and therefore they can use it (Starovoytova & Namango, 2016).

Factors associated withsupervisors

Howard stated we have to ask ourselves why students are plagiarising in university (Howard, 2001). Therefore, the role of the supervisor/professor needs to be examined. Ashworth discovered in his research that the professor's preoccupation with teaching in higher education and lack of care and contact with students enhanced the student's readiness for plagiarism (Ashworth *et al.,*., 1997). Therefore, some researchers believe that if tutors spend more time with students and teach them how to avoid plagiarism that will help to combat the problem as well as teaching them writing plans and time management (Cleary, 2017; Wilhoit, 1994). Unfortunately, the heavy burden of administrative and academic work on the professor often prevents them from spending more time with students. In addition, it is important that professors should not ignore plagiarism otherwise they will not learn.
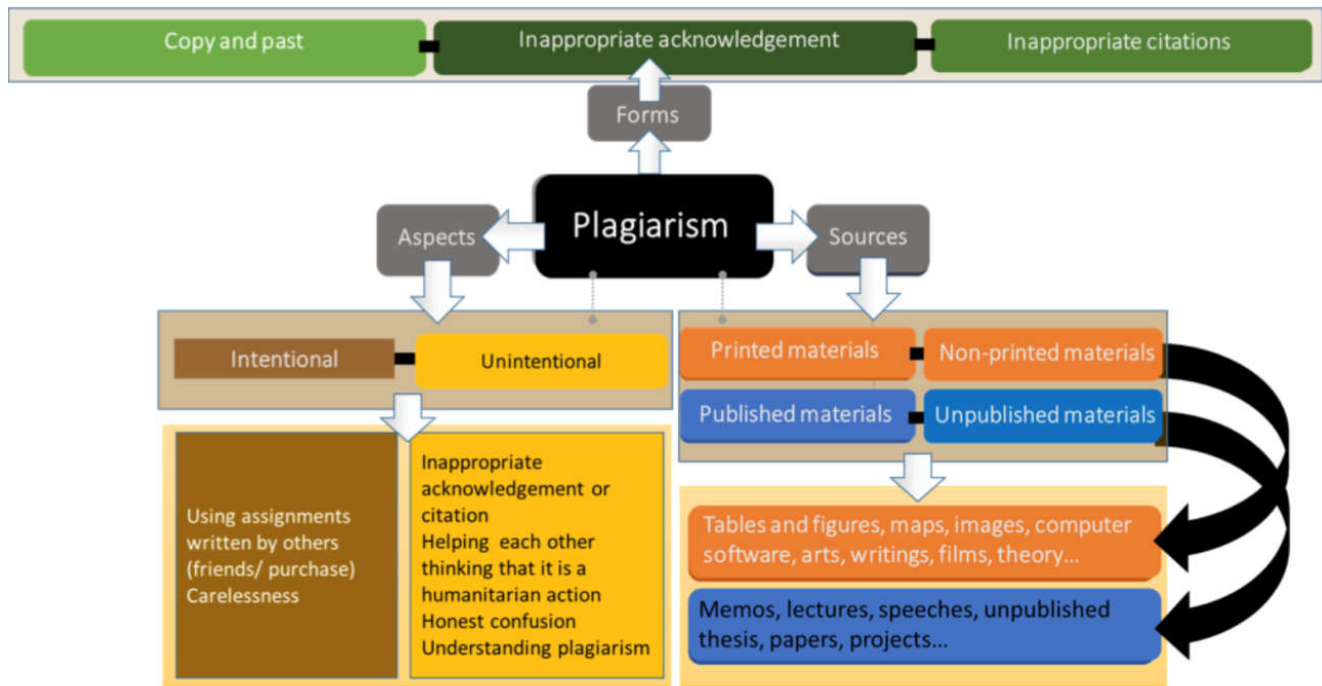
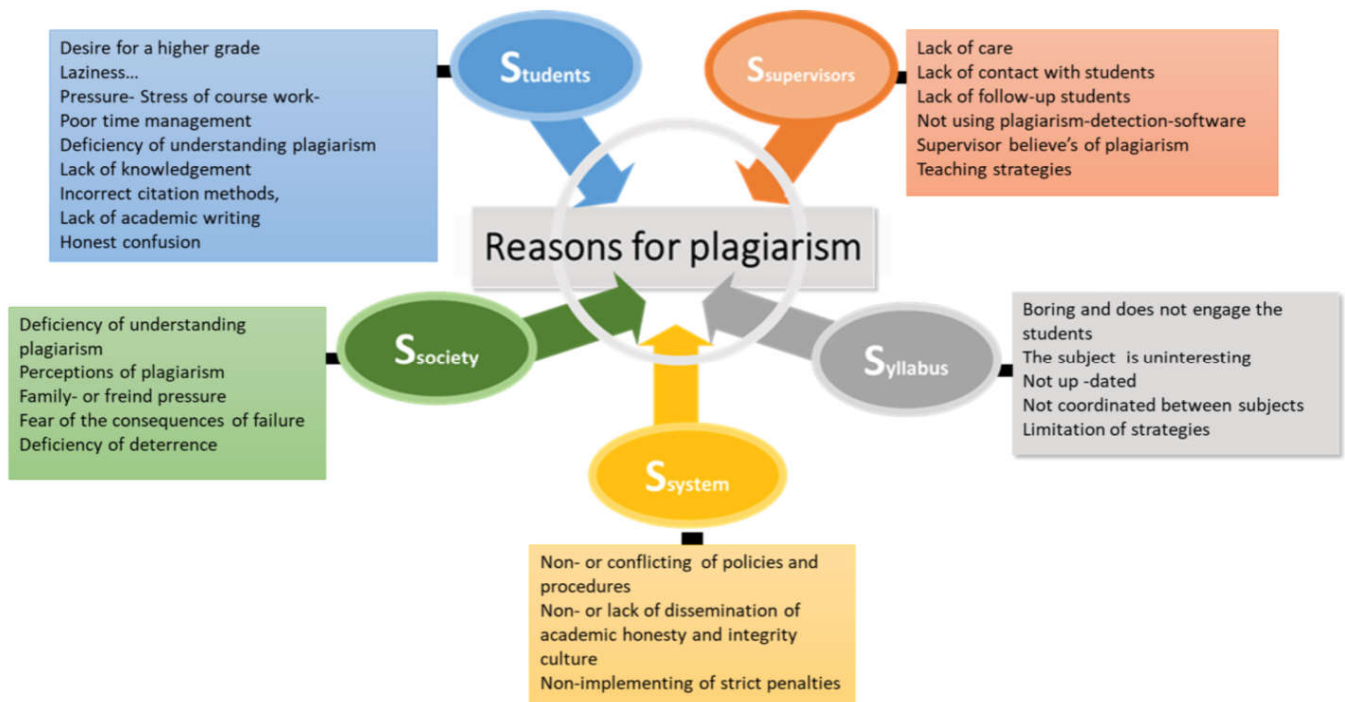**Fig. 1. Aspects, sources and forms of plagiarism**

Fig. 2. Theoretical framework of reasons for plagiarism

Bennett stated that if students plagiarize this means they do not learn how to create ideas or engage in logical argument and they do not know how to analyse and evaluate because they simply repeat others works without adding anything new (Bennett, 2005). The means of submitting the assignments can prohibit the incidents of plagiarism as Starovoytova & Namango recommended professors should receive student's assignments written by hand and encourage them to use plagiarism-detection-software before final submission (Starovoytova & Namango, 2016).

Factors associated with syllabus

The syllabus that the supervisor is teaching from can also be a catalyst to plagiarism. For example, if the specification includes teaching strategies such as collaboration and group work with students as they develop and compose coursework ideas (Wilhoit,1994; Ashworth *et al.,*., 1997). In addition, if the project brief involves discussion and peer criticism this may confuse the student and make them engage in collaboration and ultimately plagiarism (Wilhoit, 1994). Also, if the syllabus is boring and does not engage the students (Chen & Chou, 2017) this could result in plagiarism as the

students may not attend class and therefore lack confidence in the subject (Cleary, 2017) and resort to looking online for the information. That syllabus may not be in line with the requirements of the course if the information related to the area of specialization development or educational strategies that not be aligned with technological development, or not up-dated with the important references related to the latest in the field. Student could be negatively affected or indirectly influenced by the abundance of sources available especially if he was impressed. On the other angle, the lack of coordination between all syllabuses at the same level of education can be another reason to engage students to the plagiarism, which the student found himself in front of a large amount of assignments and requirements.

Factors associated with system

As Walker confirmed that policies and procedures in some universities may be conflicting and unfair (Walker, 1998) and there is deficiency of deterrents to stop student's plagiarism (Zobel & Hamilton, 2002). Without a student do not know whatthey should do and Starovoytova & Namango recommend that all universities should provide and publicise their plagiarism procedures (Starovoytova & Namango, 2016). Plagiarism is dangerous as Sims (1993) found that the student that engages in some dishonest behaviours in college is likely to repeat this behaviour in the workplace (Sims, 1993). Therefore, Walker indicates that universities need to be more practical and proactive in controlling student plagiarism by developing clear policies and encouraging academic integrity by increasing students' awareness (Walker, 1998; Wilhoit, 1994). Moreover, understanding the student perception of plagiarism is necessary to help students avoid it (Ashworth *et al.,*1997; Chen and Chou, 2014). Starovoytova & Namango highlighted in their study a 3D-approach in managing plagiarism which consists of prevention, detection, and penalty (Starovoytova & Namango, 2016). Starovoytova & Namango mentioned that universities should integrate a three unit course which includes related ethics, research methodology, and referencing techniques (Starovoytova & Namango, 2016). Therefore, universities should pay attention to this subject and increase students' awareness of the importance of academic honesty and integrity. Wilhoit believesthat some students cheat on purpose (Cleary, 2017; Wilhoit, 1994) when they feel stressed and are in a pressured situation with a small risk of being caught (Cleary, 2017).

Factors associated with society

Society plays a pivotal role in this issue. Ashworth stated that, the educational environment and society has a strong influence on the student through the available sources. Are there programs that detect plagiarism? Is there a strong and unified student community that share the belief that plagiarism is dishonest? (Ashworth *et al.,*., 1997). Wheeler stated that society's view of plagiarism is either acceptable or not and this societal belief ultimately affects whether students plagiarize (Wheeler, 2009). The existing literature offers number of reasons that can cause students to plagiarize. which can be divided into (Student, Supervisor, Syllabus, System, and Society) (5s). Fig (2) shows the theoretical framework of reasons why students plagiarize.

Conclusions

Through this research it became clear to the researchers that there are five main elements which can explain the reasons why students plagiarize. These are known as the five 'S's: Student, Supervisor, Syllabus, System, and Society. The researchers believe that any deficiencies in these elements may encourage students to plagiarize and theyconfirmthat with a low risk of being caught from universities this will only increase the likelihood of plagiarism. Therefore, they propose that universities should produce strict policies and put an appropriate procedure in place with penalties if a student is caught plagiarising. This should be consistent across the academic community and this will reduce the numbers of students plagiarising and protect educational standards. As when students plagiarize or cheat, they not only compromise their personal integrity but can impact on the institution's reputation (Engler, et al., 2008). This research should enable policy makers, syllabus developers and educational advisors to establish a clear framework to stop this behavior and raise the levels of academic integrity again.

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