

## Research Ethics and Nuances of Plagiarism with Technology Integration

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### **Abstract:**

Many studies were conducted on the topic of plagiarism around the world. It is important to stress this phenomenon because it has prevailed in the world of research where a big number of research papers are now copied-pasted versions of previously conducted research. Academic integrity needs to be highlighted in order to create creative and honest writers. This paper aims at investigating the factors that lead students to plagiarise as well as solutions suggested to reduce students' tendency to plagiarise. A quantitative approach was followed to conduct this research to collect answers about why students plagiarise and what do they think can eradicate plagiarism. Forty-two students from different levels participated in the survey as they provided answers to the research question. Results exhibited that students tend to plagiarise mainly when they feel under pressure and when the topic is not interesting to them. Moreover, secondary reasons were that students seek to get higher marks the easy way, thus, they chose to copy-paste because they are either too lazy or unmotivated to finish an honest paper or they lack writing skills and plagiarism knowledge. Finally, according to participants answers, severe actions against plagiarism were suggested by most of them to combat this phenomenon.

**Key Words:**Plagiarism, Internet, Academic Integrity, Research,Ethics.

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## Introduction

All types of plagiarism are wrong and may lead to severe consequences irrespective of whether the researcher planned to plagiarize or not. To maintain academic honesty, the researcher has to avoid plagiarism in his/her writing, he/she needs to consult various sources which need to be properly cited and referenced, simply because it is ethical. When writing a research paper, one must follow research ethics incorporating it with ethics of plagiarism to form a strong and relevant paper. Research of any sort is done to guide actions. Hence, ethics are needed to ensure that research results are true and are used properly. To deliver an honest research paper it is important to first be aware of the exact meaning of plagiarism and ethics in writing. On one hand, plagiarism is defined, according to Roig, as "Taking over the ideas, methods, or written words of another, without acknowledgement and with the intention that they are taken as the work of the deceiver." (Roig, 2005, p. 3). That is to say that one plagiarises when they copy ideas or theories of other people without giving them credit. Also, Moulton and Robison (2002) stated that plagiarism can also be seen as "depriving authors of profit that is rightfully theirs, which is theft. (Nugraha & Juang Rudianto Putra, 2019, p. 42). Hence, it is safe to say that plagiarism is a crime that should be met with the appropriate measurement .

On the other hand, as for ethics in writing stated that according to Resnik (2011, p.1), many people think of ethics as a set of rules distinguishing right from wrong, but the term "ethics" refers to norms of conduct or of action and in disciplines of study [...] and protect against "fabricating, falsifying, or misrepresenting research data" cited in (Stichler, 2014, p. 15). This suggests that ethics in writing are rules that guide research to make it true and errorless. Moreover, it indicates that incorporating ethics in writing a research paper lessens the possibility of falsifying information and previous research .

Consequently, this study was conducted to investigate the reasons behind students of Mohamed Ben Ahmed 2 university of Oran plagiarism. It is necessary to highlight this point because students of English at high education level are supposed to be fully aware of academic integrity and writing ethics. It is believed that the awareness of the factors that control students' plagiarism plays an important role in eradicating this phenomenon. Thus, this study sheds the light on why students plagiarise and what are suitable suggestions to fight plagiarism under the shade of technology integration.

## 1. Understanding Academic Integrity

The word integrity means that a person should be honest and truthful in all sorts of his dealings, so academic integrity, therefore, stands for dealing honestly with all sorts of academic dealings or settings. It requires ethical behaviour in all aspects of a person's academic life and entails strict adherence to the predefined rules and regulations of the institute (Stuart C. Gilman, PhD, 2005, p. 67).

Academic integrity does not only require students to be honest and truthful in their dealings with others and regarding the work that has been assigned to them by their instructors or teachers, but it also requires an ethical and socially acceptable behaviour from them like that an honest person is required to show in meeting his intellectual responsibilities. Academic integrity is a code of ethics in which a person is responsible for not committing such actions and identifying the elements and components of such conducts/commitments ( Mayte Edwards, 2008). Hence, academic integrity is what guides the researcher to avoid the pitfalls of plagiarism and come up with a creative, honest, and well-cited piece of a research paper. Academic Integrity is not only about avoiding getting caught cheating or plagiarising, it is also about the researcher showing that they are adding credibility to their work by making their arguments valid and providing evidence that supports the point they're making. Moreover, it is about being ethical in one's research and ethical in one's mind as well. The (Center for Academic Integrity, 1999) defines academic integrity as "a commitment, even in the face of adversity, to five fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility." This suggests that a researcher must be responsible when conducting research and that responsibility covers all types of integrity among which academic integrity occurs.

### **1.1.The Meaning of Academic Integrity in Computing**

The use of computer technology, on one hand, improved the quality of life for people from different professions. On the other hand, computing technology allowed people to create new and advanced techniques to violate the code of ethics and academic integrity. In the current technologically advanced era, assignments are mostly completed using computers and the internet, which has created complexities for teachers to save students from the commitment of any sort of violation of the code of ethics (Guerrero et al, 2020). It influences the atmosphere at the college as well as affects all aspects of life for both students and teachers . The main definition of Academic Integrity states that academic honesty is crucial to the achievement of our main goal in education. Unfortunately, easy access to computer technology has relatively affected the meaning of academic integrity, plagiarism, and cheating.

## **2. Plagiarism in the new digital age**

The digital age also affects plagiarism. Researchers nowadays have easy access to material and data on the internet which makes it easy to copy and paste information. This suggests that plagiarism is not a difficult task in this new digital age that opened the door for researchers to easily conduct an unethical study. In this regard, it is a matter of willingness when it comes to plagiarism in research .

Michael Connor pointed out that: "Academics who once praised the internet for giving students more access to information is now worried it is providing students with easy access to pre-written essays (Connors, M., 1996). Researches show that plagiarism is a huge unsolved handicap in today's institutions of higher education.(Mccabe, Donald, 2005)surveyed undergraduate students, regarding

plagiarism in the light of the continuously growing technology, he found that 80% of the participants cheated at least once in their college career, and here it is any kind of cheating or plagiarizing. Also, the proportion of students admitting inappropriate collaboration on work increased from 30 to 38%. Hence, from 1963 to 1993 this percentage increased from 11% to 49%. Although these numbers are still going up, scholars remain preservative regarding the fact that it is merely due to the internet only. It may be possible for a generation who has grown up in a web copy-paste culture to consider plagiarism as a moral issue. somewhat amazingly, it is not only struggling students who plagiarize, but it may also be students who are under pressure to achieve, who are more likely to engage in the subtler form of plagiarism. maybe because they are struggling to finish on time, or the work is vital for their grade. Perhaps, the students are not fascinated by the work and probably it is because they think that the work is unfair to the purpose where they need no hope of success while not cheating, so what possible can push students to plagiarize? Is it really due to the easy access to digital input?

## **2.1.Types of authors**

According to many scholars, plagiarism can be intentional and unintentional; hence, two types of authors have plagiarism in their writings. The first type is direct plagiarising that the author would plagiarise by duplicating another author's text exactly and pretending as his/her work. It is commonly known as copy-pasting in word processing applications (Das N., 2018). The second type is about authors who plagiarize unconsciously due to several factors such as self-plagiarism, uncited ideas, or accidental similarity (Roig, 2005, p. 16).

In this regard, it is important to be fully aware of plagiarism and what is considered plagiarism to not deliver a plagiarised research paper unintentionally. That is to say, one should be ethical and follow the exact rules that help to avoid plagiarism as well as be guided with ethical restrictions when writing a research paper.

## **3. Reasons for plagiarising**

Previous research showed that the exact reasons for students to plagiarise are complex but worth examining. According to (Middle Georgia State University, 2019), there are several standard reasons for which students tend to plagiarise. These reasons break down into four categories:

### **3.1.Writing and research skills:**

This category includes students' lack of research and source evaluation skills. Many students do not know how to search a journal, a catalogue, or any other form of reference. Also, they don't have the skill to critically evaluate a source in terms of quality and relevance. This can have a serious impact on students' research .

Furthermore, confusion is also important in this case. Students might confuse between plagiarism and paraphrasing. Studies indicate that up to 60% of students

cannot distinguish between paraphrased and plagiarized text (Roig, 2005). This can lead to unintentional plagiarism. Moreover; confusion about terminology is also a factor for which students plagiarise where they do not differentiate between different types of writings and face difficulties in understanding the assignments given to them; hence, they tend to copy-past and use unethical practices in doing their research .

Another type of confusion is that of citation skills ignorance. Many students don't have the appropriate skills to properly cite a reference. Thus, they either fall into the unintentional trap of plagiarism or deliberately chose to cite in the way they think is correct and end up plagiarising. Also, internet sources can be difficult to cite, so students tend to ignore the correct way of citing internet sources and often make mistakes.

### **3.2.Misunderstanding key concepts:**

This category concerns students' misconceptions about the plagiarism concept. Students might think that plagiarism is only about copying others' work word by word, however, they neglect the fact that stealing others' ideas without referencing is also considered plagiarism .

Furthermore; misconception of intellectual property and copyright concepts is also an important factor. Students might not be aware that public online information for instance is intellectual property. Thus, they might not give appropriate attribution to these sources. Moreover, students may consider online sources as public knowledge that doesn't need to be referenced. They do not realize that they should give proper citation of these sources to credit their owners and for the sake of academic integrity.

### **3.3.Internal and external factors**

In this category, students tend to plagiarise when they are under pressure of any kind. Students who compete to get higher grades or to gain a scholarship usually chose to plagiarise to maintain their goals. It is grades and levels that are most important for students, hence; plagiarising makes it easier for them to make sure that they are doing well and giving valid information in their research .

Moreover, it is due to students thinking that others who compete are also being unethical and will certainly get good grades and pass. Thus, plagiarism is easier for them to reach their goal regardless of whether they are learning or not because some of them are not interested in their education compared to their job aspirations .

Furthermore, students often do not have the skill of time management and organization, hence; they tend to procrastinate in filling a large research project. They tend to plagiarise to finish the work and submit an unethical paper rather than spending time on the reading and referencing because to them it's too much work .

### 3.4. New age technology

Thanks to technology, it has become much easier for students to plagiarise. They can easily copy-past passages from previous research and pass them off as their own. Moreover, they can easily get already-written publications and hand them as their work without any referencing. Not only that, but students might also think about hiring others who are in seek of money and ready to write their assignments for them. In this regard, technology has made it much easier for students to compile their research papers in a very short time which is interesting especially if the topic is not really in the interest of the student .

To sum up, students merely plagiarise, according to RIT (Rochester Institution of Technology), due to these standards frequently stated reasons:

- Desire to get a good grade
- Fear of failing
- Procrastination or poor time management
- Disinterest in the assignment
- Confusion about what constitutes plagiarism or current university policies

## 4. Methodology

A quantitative study was conducted to investigate the factors that lead students of Mohamed ben Ahmed 2 university of Oran to plagiarise. Participants were given an online questionnaire made by google form to fill in to clearly describe their attitudes towards plagiarism. We were able to reveal the reasons behind students' tendency to plagiarise and come up with potential solutions to lessen the intensity of plagiarism at university .

### 4.1.Participants

The 45 participants who anonymously filled in the questionnaire were from Mohamed ben Ahmed 2 university of Oran. The questionnaire survey was sent online to these students via Facebook and email. Participants were of different levels (L1/2/3 and M1/2). They were asked to answer 9 questions about their perspective of plagiarism and what makes them tend to plagiarise. The 42 respondents gave valid answers about their experience with plagiarism and it helped to recognize what pushes them to plagiarise rather than being genuine in doing research.

### 4.2.Understanding students' attitudes towards plagiarism

To investigate whether participants were aware of plagiarism at first, they were asked to answer the close-ended question:

‘have you ever been told about plagiarism at school or university?’ with the options of Yes / No as answers. 85.7% answered 'Yes' while 14.3% answered 'No'. Figure 1 shows a sample of the question and the participants' percentages based on their answers This shows that almost all students were aware of plagiarism nature and that when they plagiarise, it is not because they are not aware.

Have you ever been told about plagiarism at school or university?

42 responses

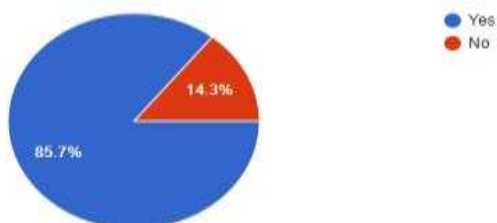


**Figure 1**

To investigate whether participants were aware that plagiarism is an illegal act and is considered theft, they were asked to answer the close-ended question:

*'Do you think plagiarism is a scientific theft?'* with the options of Yes / No/ Maybe as answers. 78.6% answered 'Yes' while 14.3% were not sure whether it's a scientific theft and answered 'Maybe'. **Figure 2** shows a sample of the question and the participants' percentages based on their answers.

Do you think plagiarism is a scientific theft ( the act of stealing others' personal work)?

42 responses

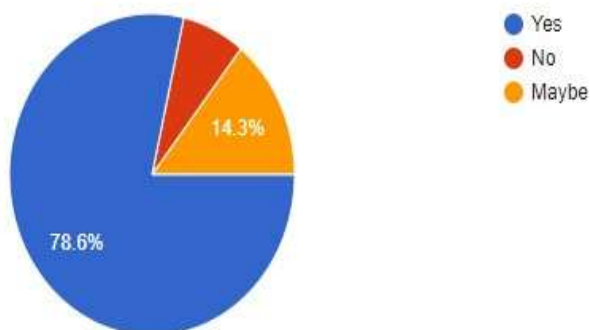


**Figure 2**

### ***Factors that lead students to plagiarise***

To investigate why participants, tend to plagiarise, they were asked to answer a collection of closed-ended questions with the options of Yes / No/ Sometimes as answers.

**Figure 3** shows a sample of participants' answers to the question:

*'Do you tend to plagiarise when you are under pressure (deadline / not enough information...)?'*

35.7% answered with a 'Yes', 16.7% answered 'No' while 47.6% said that they 'Sometimes' plagiarise when they are under pressure. This shows that students tend to plagiarise when they feel under pressure due to either deadlines or not having enough resources to collect data from.

Do you tend to plagiarise when you are under pressure ( deadline / not enough information...)?

42 responses

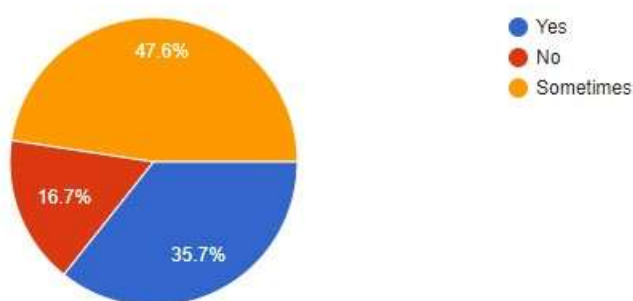


**Figure 3**

**Figure 4** shows a sample of participants answers to the question:

*'do you tend to plagiarise when you're not interested in the topic'*

40.5% answered with a 'Yes', 31% answered 'No' while 28.6% said that they 'Sometimes' plagiarise when they are not interested in the topic. This indicates that students need to be interested in the topic to avoid copying others' ideas and referring to them as their own.

Do you tend to plagiarise when you're not interested in the topic ?

42 responses

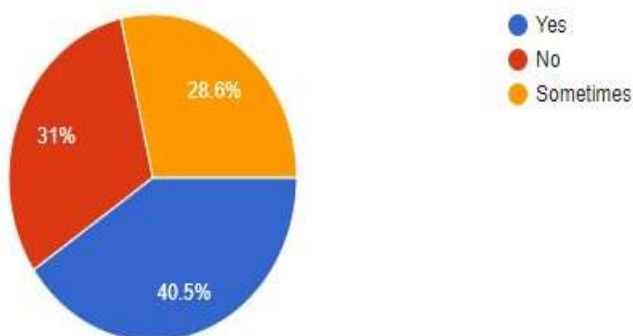


**Figure 4**

### ***How do students perceive plagiarism?***

To investigate how do participants perceive plagiarism, they were asked to answer questions related to their understanding of plagiarism even if they feel the need to plagiarise due to previous factors.

**Figure 5** shows a sample of students answers to the question:

*'Do you still think plagiarising is unethical when the topic is not interesting or not relevant to your field of study?'*

73.8% answered with a 'Yes', 9.5% answered 'No' while 16.7% said that they 'Maybe' think that plagiarism is still unethical even if they are not interested in the topic.

Do you still think plagiarising is unethical when the topic is not interesting or not relevant to your field of study ?

42 responses

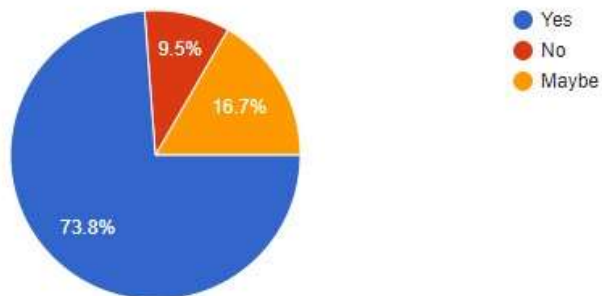


**Figure 5**

**Figure 6** shows a sample of participants answers to the question:

*'Do you find everything you are looking for on the internet?'*

33.3% answered with a 'Yes' while 66.7% answered 'No' claiming that they do not find everything that they're looking for on the internet.

Do you find everything you are looking for in the internet ?

42 responses

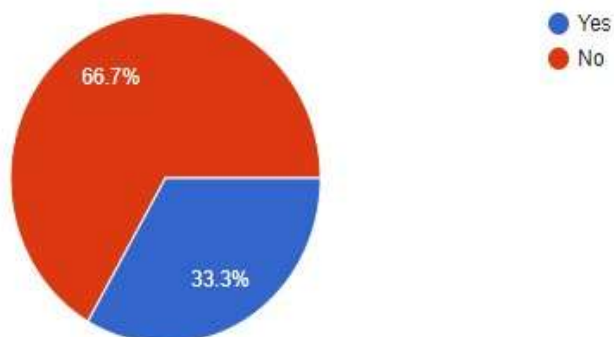


**Figure 6**

**Figure 7** shows a sample of participants answers to the question:

*'Are you aware of academic integrity and ethics when working on a research paper?'*

83.3% answered with a 'Yes' and 16.7% answered with a 'No' exhibiting that they were not aware of academic integrity while working on a research paper.

Are you aware of academic integrity and ethics when working on a research paper ?

42 responses

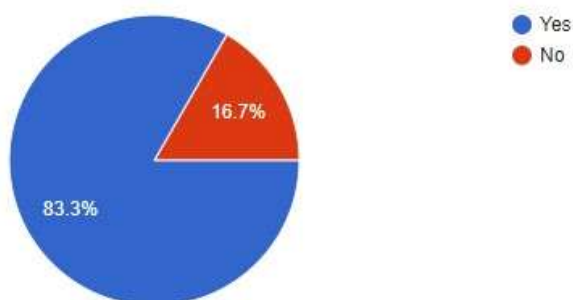


**Figure 7**

**Figure 8** shows a sample of participants answers to the question:

*Why, in your opinion, do students plagiarise?*

Participants were given different options to choose for their answers:

- *To gain better marks or high grades.*
- *Bad time management and organization.*
- *lack of motivation and laziness.*
- *Poor writing skills.*
- *Poor understanding of plagiarism.*
- *No severe actions were taken against plagiarism*

The majority of students (61.9%) answered that they plagiarise to '*To gain better marks or high grades.*' While 54.8% answered that students plagiarise due to '*lack of motivation and laziness*'. Moreover; 52.4% said that it's due to '*Poor writing skills*'.

Furthermore; 50% of the participants answered that they plagiarise due to :

- *Bad time management and organization.*
- *No severe actions were taken against plagiarism*

Why, in your opinion, do students plagiarise?

42 responses

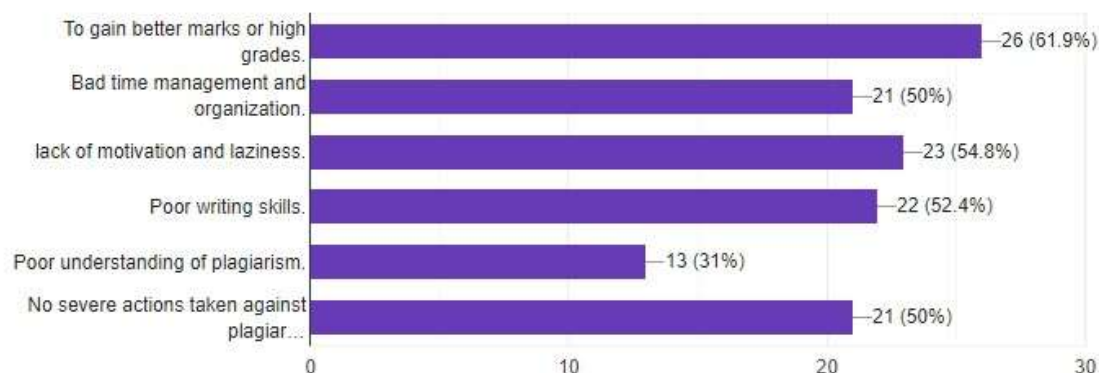


**Figure 8**

Finally, participants were asked to give their opinion about what to do to make sure that students do not plagiarise :

*'In your opinion, what can be done to make sure that students do not plagiarise'* 28 participants answered this question giving different solutions that they think can reduce plagiarism.

Most answers to this question stressed the importance of facing plagiarism with severe actions, simplifying topics to students, and monitoring students in researching by educating them well about plagiarism and writing skills.

*'It's up to the teacher to simplify the methodology of writing! Instead of giving a topic, running, and expecting the student to do all the job on his own, The Teacher should monitor, guide, and provide all the necessary tips/tools to make It all Clear for the students.'*

*'Students should be aware that stealing others' works is unethical and not scientific. They must be severely sanctioned in case of plagiarism. Students need to find interest in what they study and be motivated about it not only for good marks but to develop their skills by reading and being curious about their study domain. Reading and making mini researches help too much in reducing plagiarism since it makes students accustomed to developing their skills in making research and writing.'*

**Figure 9/10** shows a sample of participants' answers to the above question.

In your opinion, what can be done to make sure that students do not plagiarise

28 responses

Establish A Specialized Monitoring Committee In This Field , while Working To Deter Such Behavior BY Imposing Very Severe Penalties

motivat them and try to put them in less pressure situation

It's up to the teacher to simplify the methodology of writing !  
Instead of giving a topic , running and expecting the student to do all the job by his own , The Teacher should monitor , guide and provide all the necessary tips / tools to make It all Clear for the students .

Although many students admitted to plagiarism after the studies that were done over thousands of them in US, it was stated that there must have been students who couldn't be detected. As far as I am concerned, it would be better to check the best websites for plagiarism checking at least to diminish the quantity of cheaters.

give them notable Education so they can rely on their self

Experimental work  
Submit questionnaires about the research

In your opinion, what can be done to make sure that students do not plagiarise

28 responses

The student must be aware about the topic he is going to investigate in, and he has to mater the writing skills and has a big knowledge about it.

We can never make sure when it comes to plagiarism.

Be next to them by knowing their own weaknesses points  
There level of education , their problems and try to help them... or maybe by giving them a course of learning ethics because there are so many people do not understand what they are doing...  
So in 3 point

1\_ its its someone's hard working so it is so unfair to name it by yourself

2\_ dishonesty with your own brain u don't give him that chance to show his skills

\_3 being unreasonable for my own work that I should already save it from this kind of situations

Figure 10

## 5. Discussion:

The survey showed that university students are properly aware that plagiarism is unethical and illegal, however, they still tend to plagiarise to complete the paper given to them at the deadline. They tend to choose plagiarism as their motive to gain better marks as well as to finish a work that they are not interested in. Students -according to the survey- prefer to be given interesting topics and larger time for them to work properly on their research paper which is important because the topic nature plays an important role in finding the motivation needed to finish a paper. Furthermore; students need to be adequately prepared to write and have a clear understanding of what might be considered plagiarism to avoid it. As most participants in the survey exhibited, actions should be taken against plagiarism to reduce this phenomenon.

## 6. Academic Implications

One of the most essential implications in this regard is the responsibility of the university administration, its policy towards academic dishonesty should be clear and straightforward, it can put charges and penalties on every act of plagiarism, depending on its degree. Also, this policy should be posted and advertised everywhere around the university, website, library and dorms.

These policies should be enforced fairly and consistently because as the survey reports, most students are aware of plagiarism and academic dishonesty. However, they do not have a deep insight on the policy adopted towards it, nor they are afraid of the consequences especially when technology is facilitating all types of plagiarism even those that cannot be detected easily.

Administrators could also hold seminars - where attendance is mandatory- to discuss students' inappropriate use of the internet and its consequences, this particular point leads us to the next implication, the importance of educating students about academic dishonesty.

It is important to educate students about academic dishonesty by raising awareness about the valuable importance of enhancing their ability in writing and practising research techniques, as well as using the internet to rather learn about how to organize data and information, in addition to getting inspired by the previous works in their field, and all means these works are the efforts of some people who once were students like them.

When introducing students with such principles reinforce their self-esteem and encourage them towards future innovative works that they can do, this can only be approached by tackling their areas of interest and praising their authentic efforts no how small, as the survey reports, students tend to plagiarize more when the subject matter or research is not in any way important to them.

Instead of frightening students about internet plagiarism, faculties could encourage talking about it and make classroom assignments to assure students and help them

feel at ease in class, when they feel safe, they will be more eager to do their own work, because they care about the fact that the faculty respects them as individuals.

In addition, students should be clearly aware of course design and expectations consistently in the syllabus as well as class discussions, the course design should not be subject to change, the reason to strengthen confidentiality between the faculty and students.

If the faculty discusses specific internet resources and how they can be used, as well as to what extent students are allowed to copy from search engines, these demonstrations show to students how skilful and involved is the faculty in technology matters, so they can catch internet plagiarism easily. Maybe showing students a clear and easy way to cite information, facilitates the task for them and they will not be afraid even to take the information.

The faculty can explain what sophisticated approaches the faculty can use to identify cases of plagiarism. Also, providing or noting sources that will assist students in using the internet for research in appropriate ways.

To reduce academic dishonesty, a closer look should be taken on the type of assignments too, instead of giving searching assignments in subjects students do not know about, so they choose to plagiarize to provide information, they could be provided with discussion, analysis, and solving problems tasks, of previous papers, books, articles and so on. In this case, they can provide their points of view freely, they come out with new authentic papers and criticisms. The type of assignments or research paper should have a structure that would be hard for students to download, buy, or find papers that fit the requirements of the work. Not only handing the work but also discussing it in small groups, oral presentations, or through asking questions by colleagues or teacher.

It would be better to not rush students throughout the work, as the survey shows, students use internet plagiarism when they are stressed with time and circumstances, so they might deliver a copy-pasted work or weak one just because they are not motivated to do it. As a solution, the work might be delivered in sections, they can also turn in notes or drafts - to show what they did and reduce the stress - they should feel that all that they give is a plus and a very important, every particularity is as important as the whole work joined together.

Determine what specific sources the students might use, if possible.

Even in cases of plagiarism, students might be into the topic and understand it well, so it is preferable to give them the chance of making reports of their research or even short audio/ audiovisual demonstrations.

One other point to look at is the ways by which students' works are evaluated. In addition to using technology to depict plagiarism, the works can be evaluated depending on the degree of copy-paste, how good the student is in collecting information, the skills of rephrasing and manipulating data, because let's face it, it also requires a skilful intellectual mind to plagiarize in such perfection that cannot be detected.

## 7. Conclusion

According to the study conducted, students tend to plagiarise for various factors which fall under the category of pressure and non-interesting topics. They chose plagiarism as a quick tool to copy-paste what is already done in previous research. Hence, it is important to take into consideration students tendency to plagiarise in the light of technology that has made it easier to plagiarise and work on providing solutions to this phenomenon. The study results showed that students seek special training in writing and plagiarism nature in order to become ethical writers who are able to write an ethical paper and properly cite references.

## 8. Recommendations

In the light of the previously discussed data, what possible solutions might be adopted by educational system makers and faculties to reduce, or why not eradicate plagiarism at a high education level?

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