

Plagiarism in Academic Writings: Reasons and Proposed Solutions

السرقعة العلمية في الكتابات الأكاديمية: الأسباب والحلول المقترحة

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Abstract

Plagiarism in research writing is a serious offence because appropriating another author's work undermines scholarly integrity. In contemporary academic contexts, the risk of plagiarism has increased, given the ease of access to digital resources such as electronic books, essays, articles, reviews, and published studies. This paper analyses plagiarism as a growing educational and research problem. It provides a focused account of academic dishonesty, identifies common academic forms of plagiarism, and outlines key types and manifestations. The study also reviews contemporary technical and legal measures that can help limit the phenomenon. Overall, it aims to warn against the risks of plagiarism and to raise awareness among students and researchers of its academic and ethical consequences.

Keywords

Plagiarism; academic writing; academic dishonesty; causes; solutions.

ملخص

في كتابة الأبحاث، تعتبر السرقعة العلمية جريمة خطيرة لأن سرقعة عمل كاتب آخر تعتبر ممارسة غير مقبولة. في الوقت الحاضر، أصبح الوقوع في براثن السرقعة الأدبية في الكتابة الأكاديمية سهلاً جداً، حيث أن جميع المعلومات اللازمة لأبحاث الدراسات متاحة على الإنترنت؛ سواء كانت كتب إلكترونية، مقالات، مراجعات، أو أبحاث منشورة. وللأسف، قد يقع العديد من الطلاب والباحثين في فخ السرقعة الأدبية في كل مرة؛ لافتقارهم للجهود اللازمة لإنتاج ونشر نصوص علمية أصلية.

تحلل الورقة الحالية قضية السرقعة العلمية، التي تعتبر من المواضيع ذات الأهمية العالية ومن أخطر المواضيع المتعلقة بالبحث العلمي. تقدم نظرة عامة على هذه الظاهرة الخطيرة والمتنامية في المجال التعليمي، حيث تتناول شروحاً موجزاً وكاملاً لعدم الأمانة العلمية، وتكشف عن الأشكال الأكاديمية للسرقعة الأدبية، وتعدد أنواعها، والوسائل التقنية والقانونية الحديثة لوقف هذه الظاهرة. الهدف هو التحذير من خطر السرقعة الأدبية، وزيادة مستوى الوعي بين الطلاب والباحثين حول المخاطر التي تطرحها السرقعة الأدبية.

الكلمات المفتاحية

السرقعة العلمية؛ الكتابة الأكاديمية؛ غياب الأمانة العلمية؛ الأسباب؛ الحلول.

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Introduction

Academic honesty is an important pillar in the research process. As defined by most educational institutions and research communities, it demonstrates and upholds the highest integrity and honesty in all academic works that scholars do. i. e. doing a research work without cheating, and acknowledging the works of others. According to the International Centre for Academic Integrity (1999), academic honesty is:

a commitment, even in the face of adversity, to five fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. From these values flow principles of behavior that enable academic communities to translate ideas into action. (p. 4)

Within this context, academic honesty is the ‘code of conduct’ and the core of ethics that members of the academic community are expected to follow and which makes it possible for the academic community to achieve its aims and goals. It is, also, related to the concept of intellectual property, which is a concept that scholars need to be aware of when they are engaged in the process research. On the institutional level, scholars need to maintain a culture of honesty in all aspects of teaching and research.

In the context of higher education, Dakota State University listed the reasons for the importance of having academic honesty:

- ✚ Academic honesty ensures that members of society should trust those professionals and graduates of their mastery of the necessary knowledge and skills to do their jobs effectively;
- ✚ Academic integrity provides value to graduates and their degrees.
- ✚ Academic integrity offers graduates and professionals peace of mind: They know they are doing the right thing, and acting consistently so; (‘Academic Integrity’, n. d., para. 5-7).

As a matter of fact, universities and colleges worldwide, in view of maintaining the quality of education and academic integrity/ or honesty, have set up academic honesty policies. Students shall maintain academic honesty in the conduct of their studies and other learning activities at their universities and colleges.

The 21st century has brought technological revolution which has affected our lives and most fields, including education and research. As a result, our new society is characterized of rapid communications and the explosion of knowledge. The rise of the World Wide Web has revolutionized higher education sector in both teaching/ and learning processes, as it gave birth to ICTs’ integration in higher education and provided such advancements in educational technology as eLearning and other electronic systems. However, as it brought opportunities, it has become associated with academic dishonesty.

In academia, plagiarism is associated with academic dishonesty. It is considered as a serious offense because stealing the work of other writers is an unacceptable tactic. Nowadays, university students, and scholars, are being

negatively seen as cheaters in conducting their researches. As they rely totally on the World Wide Web for their research papers and articles and essays, they fall, whether directly, or indirectly, easily on committing plagiarism, which is using other researchers' works and ideas without acknowledging. Unfortunately, many students and even some scholars fall in plagiarism every year because they lack the effort to write original texts. Their works are easily detected by sophisticated software packages at education institutions.

The present paper highlights the issue of plagiarism in academic writings. It defines plagiarism and cites the reasons behind the rise of this aspect of academic dishonesty. Furthermore, it proposes some practical solutions to clean up the academic and research community from plagiarism.

Having established the critical role that integrity plays in academic pursuits, it is essential to explore the concept of academic plagiarism, a significant violation of scholarly ethics. Understanding what constitutes plagiarism is foundational to fostering originality and maintaining trust in educational and research environments.

Defining academic plagiarism

All students have to face the issue of plagiarism, which is the act of taking information and ideas from other writers and using them in their own works without acknowledging the source in an accepted manner. Academically, this is a serious offence.

As a rule of thumb, Ballard (1989) defined academic plagiarism as the act of using the words, or ideas of other authors and claim them as they are someone's own; an act which has been described as a 'cardinal sin' (p. 57), or even the 'ultimate sin' (Papadakis, 2010, p. 128).

Accordingly, Snapper (1999) stated that plagiarism seriously deprives the original authors of the benefits of their works; such as gaining academic reputation and acquiring research funding. However, it shifts these benefits to the plagiarist. Furthermore, plagiarism distorts the traceability of ideas, arguments, and results within academic literature, and withholds valuable resources for discovering related material from the reader (pp. 128- 9).

Originally, the word plagiarism is derived from the Latin word *plagarius*, which means 'kidnapper, robber, misleader, and literary thief. The act usually refers to stealing ideas, words, or concepts that are higher than the level of public knowledge (Fialkoff, 1993, p. 56).

As defined by the Writing Program Administration (WPA), plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone's else original material, or language and passes them off as they are his own. However, there is no universal definition agreement on plagiarism; confusion is rested on three areas: (1) the role of intent in

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plagiarism, (2) what is being plagiarized, and (3) the lack of clarity in defining common knowledge (as cited in Nelms, 2003, p. 3).

Since the major objective of universities is to maintain both academic integrity and quality of education, the research community has set up rules to prevent students from plagiarism. The latter is identified not briefly, but significantly from all the techniques of plagiarism so that it could be perceived unambiguously. On the academic level, the types of plagiarism are most often defined in details through implementing the policy for plagiarism prevention so that they could be applied properly (Šarlauskienė, 2012, p. 55).

In defining plagiarism, the Swinburne University of Technology, in its guide of ethics, stated that the latter occurs when somebody else's thoughts, writings or other works are appropriated and presented as of one's own. In addition, the Swinburne University of Technology's guide indicated that plagiarism is presented in the following cases:

- ✚ The use of computer programme or its part done by another person;
- ✚ The use of entire written work or its part as well as the use of a book, a magazine, a newspaper, lecture summaries, written works of students or other people, websites and data bases while writing an essay or other written works;
- ✚ Paraphrased work of another person;
- ✚ The use of pieces of music, sounds, images, graphics and photographs;
- ✚ The use of objects, artefacts, models etc. (as cited in Devlin, 2006, pp. 50-1).

Devlin (2006), in another context, went a step further when she defined plagiarism as an inappropriate collaboration between students in a task, or assignment that is later presented for assessment as individual work. Therefore, when a presenter does it having the permission from the rest of the group, it is considered as an act of plagiarism. Allowing plagiarise at university is also treated as the type of plagiarism. (p. 52). The Pennsylvania Public University indicated that 'plagiarism is action, which claims, or enables to understand that the work of another person is of your own.' So, students plagiarise when they:

- ✚ present the work, which is not written originally by them;
- ✚ copy answers or text from other students and present them as of their own;
- ✚ quote or paraphrase other works not indicating the original author;
- ✚ quote data without references to original sources;
- ✚ present the ideas of other authors as of their own;
- ✚ fake references or use improper references;

- ✚ provide presentation, programme or other work of another person with minimal changes. ('Defining Plagiarism and Academic Integrity', 2012).

Park (2003) indicated that plagiarism includes attempts which could be found out in works of other scientists. He believed that plagiarism is:

- ✚ stealing information from a work done by another person;
- ✚ the presentation of the work written by another person as of your own;
- ✚ the presentation of copied parts from works done by other people in one's
- ✚ own work with references to the source, but without quotation marks, making an impression that a work was paraphrased by the author;
- ✚ the presentation of paraphrased information from works done by other people, not indicating references to the sources. (p. 475)

In accordance with this definition, Payer (2012) stated that plagiarism is stealing and using others' ideas, words, or works and claim they are your own. Also, Stebelman considered plagiarism to consist of "claiming as your own the writings and research papers that originally belong to others (p. 48). Vessal and Habibzadeh (2007) stated that plagiarism to be 'ascribing others' ideas, processes, results and words to oneself without due acknowledgement" (p. 641). The Federal Government of the United States defined this ill practice of plagiarism as 'research misconduct as fabrication, falsification or plagiarism in proposing, implementing or reviewing of research projects or in reporting the results of research' (Mason, 2009, p. 2).

As seen in the previous, above-mentioned definitions, plagiarism is seen as an unethical act of scientific theft which destroys scientific research, threatens intellectual property, and the rights of authorship.

The aforementioned definitions have established a clear notion of plagiarism as using someone else's work, ideas, or expressions without proper acknowledgment. It is equally important to explore the nuances of the nature of plagiarism and implications. The character of plagiarism extends beyond mere copying, encompassing a range of motivations, ethical considerations, and consequences that shape its impact on academic, professional, and creative spheres. Examining the character of plagiarism allows for a deeper understanding of why it occurs and how it affects trust and integrity in various contexts.

The character and prevalence of academic plagiarism

As a matter of fact, plagiarism is present in many countries of the world. Almost all colleges and universities suffer from the ill-academic practice, although they adopted zero-tolerance policy towards plagiarism. Therefore, there is a growing concern in the global educational arena, particularly with access to Internet. i. e. It is a growing, continuous phenomenon in the educational field.

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From the aforementioned definitions, it is clear that plagiarism is regarded as ‘academic cheating’ which deserves punishment. Other scholars view plagiarism as an act of intellectual rape.

In this context, Kolich (1983) contended that ‘the worm of plagiarism spoils the fruit of intellectual inquiry and reason, and starves the seeds of originality that fosters such inquiry’ (p. 145). Accordingly, this non-academically dishonest behavior destroys intellectual curiosity and discovery among students and researchers. Therefore, to avoid such ill-behavior, or mis-conduct should be avoided by teachers encouraging students to intellectually engage with ideas.

Le Horn (2001) also described plagiarism as a ‘synonym for cheating and learning dishonesty’ (p. 33). Laird (1994) believed that Internet plagiarism is a burgeoning problem which does not cost students time or money, but, on the other hand, it destroys academic integrity of academia and the research community (p. 59).

In another context, some scholars claimed that plagiarism is totally a wrong action, whether it is intentional or, unintentional. Godfrey and Waugh (2002) argued that plagiarism is an intentional act of cheating, contending that students know that they are doing a wrong act and they deserve punishment (pp. 1-3).

Larkham and Manns (2002), after conducting a small- scale study of plagiarism in nine higher education institutions in England, argued that plagiarism is largely a case of cheating, but they claimed that there are ‘degrees of plagiarism’ and that both plagiarism and cheating are a matter of breach of trust and ethics. For them, “an unethical student is likely to be an unethical practitioner” (pp. 346-8).

Nonis and Swift (2001) argued that colleges and universities must demonstrate that they promote high standards of academic integrity and ensure that students who plagiarize or cheat are not rewarded with university degrees. So, when academics act seriously as gatekeepers for preserving ethical practices, the emphasis is placed on teachers, and institutional processes are seen to bear the responsibility to detect and deter student plagiarism (p. 73-4).

However, teachers distinguish between intentional and unintentional plagiarism. When students forget their citations, or referencing, such as first-year undergraduate students who may be unfamiliar with referencing codes in academic institutions. Some staff consider these actions as unintentional plagiarism which poses real difficulties for teachers, as they must decide whether plagiarism that has been detected in students’ works was intentional or not.

In contrast to intentional form of plagiarism, unintentional plagiarism is commonly known as the act of not giving credit for someone else’s ideas, or misusing the sources because of the lack of understanding of the guidelines and rules of referencing and the lack of understanding of paraphrasing, summarizing, and quoting. Even if it was not intentional, it is still plagiarism and not acceptable (‘Citing Sources: Intentional & Unintentional Plagiarism’, 2025 para. 5).

Unintentional plagiarism occurs when students do not have any intention to deceive the teacher. In such circumstances, teachers consider that students merely use incorrect citation or referencing practices, such as lack of quotation marks indicating direct speech, poor or non-existent bibliographies and incorrect or no reference lists. If a student uses the work of another, but without an intention to deceive the teacher—perhaps the source is used naïvely, mistakenly or sloppily, then this is not equivalent to plagiarism (Ilina, 2008, p. 2).

Hawley (1984) claimed that many students present inappropriate documentation to teachers from weak paraphrasing style to verbatim transcription with no crediting of sources (p. 35). He agreed that:

Plagiarism is not carried on exclusively by evil students whose sole intent is to defraud the unsuspecting professor. Much unacceptable documentation in fact, may come more from simple ignorance rather than deceit. (p. 38)

Richardson (2001) argued that unintentional plagiarism is not classified as academic cheating and that staff, sometimes, find it difficult to assess the situation and act equitably (p. 10).

Pennycook (1996) believed that it important to differentiate between good and bad plagiarism (p. 226). He considered that not all acts of plagiarism are intentional, and students should take a broader cultural view of academic writing and master its conventions. Therefore, the mastery of conventions of writing and research tools for students are the key to successful writing in research.

Plagiarism, as a growing educational phenomenon, is directly related to the Internet. The latter is an open source of knowledge. Whenever students log onto Internet websites, they find useful information and downloadable materials; such as, books, magazines, articles, and reviews.

The claim that the Internet, as an open source of knowledge, leads students to practice plagiarism both intentionally and unintentionally holds true in various contexts, but it requires qualification to understand the nuances of how and why this occurs. The specific contexts are outlined below:

Ease of Access to Information: The Internet provides instant access to vast amounts of information through websites, articles, blogs, and academic repositories like Google Scholar or Wikipedia. According to Sahin, Balta, and Ercan (2010), students can copy text, ideas, or even entire papers with minimal effort. Some students deliberately copy content from online sources without attribution to save time or effort. For example, a student might download a pre-written essay from a site like Course Hero or copy paragraphs from a blog post to meet a deadline, knowing it's unethical. Others may unintentionally plagiarize by failing to properly cite sources due to a lack of understanding of citation rules. For instance, a high school student might paraphrase a Wikipedia article without citing it, assuming it is

‘common knowledge’ because it’s freely available. The accessibility of information doesn’t inherently cause plagiarism, but it lowers the barrier to copying. Educational institutions often lack consistent training on digital literacy and proper citation practices, exacerbating unintentional cases, while the temptation to cut corners drives intentional plagiarism; (p. 236)

- **Copy-Paste Culture and Digital Tools:** The Internet’s design encourages copying and pasting, with tools like *Ctrl+C/Ctrl+V* or browser extensions making it easy to extract text, images, or code. Students working on assignments in digital environments often use these features without fully processing the content. A student might copy code from Stack Overflow for a programming assignment or reuse a presentation slide from SlideShare without credit, fully aware they’re passing off someone else’s work as their own. Students may inadvertently fail to credit sources when compiling notes from multiple online documents. For example, a student might paste snippets from several websites into a single document for a research paper and later forget which parts were quoted or paraphrased, leading to improper attribution. The copy-paste functionality is a tool, not a cause of plagiarism. Intentional misuse stems from academic pressure or laziness, while unintentional cases often arise from poor note-taking habits or confusion about how to integrate digital sources ethically; (Combes, n. d., pp. 6-7)
- **Abundance of Essay Mills and Content Farms:** The Internet hosts numerous ‘essay mill’ websites and content farms that sell pre-written papers or custom essays. These services explicitly target students, advertising quick solutions for assignments. Students who purchase essays from sites like *EssayPro* or *Chegg* and submit them as their own are engaging in deliberate plagiarism. For example, a college student might buy a term paper on a historical topic to avoid researching it themselves. Less commonly, students might use these services without realizing the ethical implications, especially if the site markets itself as a ‘study aid.’ For instance, a student might use a ‘sample essay’ as a template but submit it with minimal changes, not understanding this constitutes plagiarism. The existence of these services preys on students’ vulnerabilities, such as time constraints or academic pressure, but intentional plagiarism dominates here. Unintentional cases are rarer and typically involve younger or less experienced students who misinterpret the legitimacy of these platforms; (Khomami, 2017, para. 6)
- **Cultural and Educational Differences:** The Internet exposes students to global content, where cultural norms around intellectual property vary. In some educational systems, reproducing information without attribution is less stigmatized, especially in collectivist cultures or under-resourced institutions. In a study conducted by Temirova, Yanova, and Isipova in 2024, they found that international students studying in Western institutions might knowingly replicate online content without citation, following practices acceptable in their home countries. For example, a student from a country where rote memorization is prioritized might copy an online article, viewing

it as a valid way to demonstrate knowledge. Students unfamiliar with strict Western citation standards (e.g., APA, MLA) may unintentionally plagiarize by not citing online sources. For instance, a first-year international student might use a journal article's ideas without a citation, assuming the Internet's open nature negates the need for attribution. Cultural differences do not justify plagiarism but highlight the need for education on academic integrity. The Internet amplifies this issue by providing access to diverse sources without clear guidance on global citation norms; (pp. 193-4)

- **Social media and Informal Content Sharing:** Platforms like *X*, *Reddit*, or *TikTok* allow users to share ideas, summaries, or educational content in informal formats. Zinaida and Eberle (2024) reported that students often encounter these posts and may incorporate them into their work without formal attribution. A student might lift a detailed analysis from an *X* thread or a *Reddit* post and submit it as their own, knowing it is not their original work. For example, a literature student might use a *Reddit* user's interpretation of a novel without credit. Students may assume social media content doesn't require citation due to its informal nature. For instance, a student might use a concept explained in a YouTube video or *X* post without citing it, not realizing it's an original idea attributable to the creator. The informal tone of social media blurs the line between 'common knowledge' and original content, contributing to unintentional plagiarism. Intentional cases often stem from students exploiting the anonymity or accessibility of these platforms. (pp. 2-4)

Below plagiarism, there is teaching approaches which, on another hand, play a definite role in the practice of plagiarism.

To deal with, the transmissive mode relies on traditional teaching methods, and aims for the transmission and subsequent assimilation of pre-existing knowledge, theories, strategies and models (Sfard, 1998, as cited in Svensson, Lundqvist, & Middleton, 2017, p. 5). The rationale for this teaching mode is that teachers focus on content- driven and content- assessed. i. e. the units of study have been given to students who should demonstrate a grasp of knowledge which are valued. In this mode of teaching, the teacher is the center of the teaching process and provides information to be absorbed by students and tested on how this information are reproduced and applied.

On the other hand, the transformative mode appreciates the whole person as a learner and how he/ she connects with himself/ herself. In transformative teaching approach, the instructor's purpose is greater than delivery of information. Transformational teachers, as opposed to content-focused ones, assist students in developing into meta-critical learners who are proficient in goal-setting, reflection, and critical thinking. Transformational teachers employ a range of transformational teaching techniques, including inquiry-based learning, service

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learning, and project-based learning, to achieve that aim (Mezirow, 2000, as cited in Svensson, Lundqvist, & Middleton, 2017, p. 5).

As the boundaries between research and plagiarism are unclear, knowing the various forms of plagiarism is an important step to avoid it. From the aforementioned definitions, we notice that the plagiarism phenomenon rests on six elements which are explained below as follows:

- ✚ **The object:** It can be words, phrases, sentences, or a text (or large section of). Also, the object can be concepts, or ideas;
- ✚ **Which has been taken (stolen):** Taking an object without acknowledgement is an illegal form of academic plagiarism which deserves punishment;
- ✚ **The particular source:** The use of several sources used in plagiarism; such as, books, journals, reviews, papers, ... etc. They can also include spoken and other audio- visual sources;
- ✚ **The agent:** The agent of plagiarism is an individual student;
- ✚ **No acknowledgement:** The lack of acknowledgment, or attribution to the source involved in plagiarism. i. e. Without appropriate acknowledgment, without an explicit indication, inadequate recognition and failing to give appropriate acknowledgment;
- ✚ **Intention to deceive:** Although the intention in plagiarism is strenuously debated, the individual student always plagiarize in order to deceive his tutor as the sole maker of the work. So, intention is relevant to plagiarism. If plagiarism is found to occur in a student's work, an intentional act.

Having explored the nature and ethical implications of academic plagiarism, it becomes clear that this issue undermines the integrity of scholarly work. To fully grasp the scope of this problem, it is crucial to examine its prevalence and impact through key statistics. The figures below provide a quantitative perspective on how widespread plagiarism is in academic settings and highlight the urgency of addressing it.

Key Statistics on Plagiarism in Education and Research

Plagiarism has indeed become a significant concern in educational and research fields, with various studies highlighting its prevalence and trends. The key statistics and insights provided below are based on available data, focusing on recent years and the rise of plagiarism in academic settings.

✚ Prevalence Among Students

- A large survey by the International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI) conducted over 12 years across 24 US universities found that 95% of students admitted to engaging in some form of cheating,

including plagiarism, at least once; (McCabe, Treviño, & Butterfield, 2012, p. 30)

- A 7-year study by Donald McCabe involving over 70,000 high school students reported that 58% admitted to plagiarizing content, with 64% confessing to cheating on tests and 95% engaging in some form of cheating; (McCabe, Treviño, & Butterfield, 2012, p. 31)
- Plagiarism rates among undergraduates range from 19% to 81%, depending on the institution and methodology, with 62% confessing to cheating on written assignments and 39% on exams; (McCabe, Treviño & Butterfield, 2001, p. 219)
- Graduate students also show significant plagiarism rates, with 27% of master's theses and 42.6% of research proposals in STEM fields containing plagiarized content; (Foltýnek, Meuschke, and Gipp, 2020, p. 14)
- A survey revealed that 47% of graduate students engaged in plagiarism during their studies, and 28% of PhD candidates were found to have plagiarized their research. (Bretag and Mahmud, 2016, p. 8)

Trends Over Time

- A study analyzing 25,864 written assignments from 42 academic institutions in 2019, 2020, and 2023 found that plagiarism rates increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly with the shift to online learning, but returned to pre-pandemic levels afterward; (Newton, Xiromeriti, and Rogers, 2023, p. 11)
- Copyleaks reported a 10% increase in plagiarism rates (from 35% to 45%) when instruction moved online during the pandemic; (Copyleaks, 2021, p. 4)
- However, a more recent report from Copyleaks noted a 51% decrease in detected plagiarism from January 2023 to January 2024 across seven countries, with U.S. rates dropping from 35% to 17%, possibly due to increased use of AI-generated content; (Copyleaks, 2021, p. 8)
- A study from 2004 to 2019 at a single university showed a downward trend in plagiarism from 2004 to 2014, but rates stabilized between 2014 and 2019, suggesting no further decline. (Bretag, Harper, Burton, Ellis, Newton, van Haeringen, Saddiqui, S., and Rozenberg., 2019, p. 132)

Impact of Technology and AI

- The rise of generative AI tools like ChatGPT has introduced new challenges. A 2023 study found that 89% of students used ChatGPT for homework, with 48% using it for at-home tests or quizzes, 53% for essays, and 22% for outlines. Additionally, 19% of text generated

by ChatGPT (especially GPT-3 and GPT-3.5) matched previously generated texts or other sources, raising plagiarism concerns; (Cotton, Cotton, and Shipway, 2023, p. 5)

- 59.7% of content generated by GPT-3.5 included some form of plagiarism, and 72% of college professors familiar with ChatGPT expressed concerns about its role in cheating; (Rogers, Yuan, and Karpovich, 2023, p. 8; Wiley & Streitfeld, 2023, p. 15).
- The increased availability of online resources has facilitated plagiarism, with 36% of undergraduates admitting to copying sentences from the internet without citation and 38% from written sources without proper referencing; (McCabe et al., 2021, pp. 234-5)

Disciplinary and Regional Variations

- Plagiarism rates are higher in humanities and social sciences, with 37% of students in these fields admitting to plagiarism, compared to STEM fields, where rates can be as high as 42.6% for research proposals; (Foltýnek, Meuschke, and Gipp, 2020, p. 9; Bretag, Harper, Burton, Ellis, Newton, and Rozenberg, 2019, p. 683)
- In biomedical research, 15% of submitted papers contained plagiarism, and 33% of researchers admitted to self-plagiarism; (Pupovac, Prijić-Samaržija, and Petrovečki, 2020, p. 1206; Stretton, Bramich, Keys, Monk, Ely, Haley, and Woolley, p. 8).
- In Canada, 14.1% of students plagiarized words without referencing in 2021, while in the U.S., 14.5% intentionally used others' text without proper citation, and 3.2% were caught plagiarizing; (Christensen, Eaton, and Chibry, 2022, p. 15; McCabe et al., 2021, p. 47).
- A study in Rwanda highlighted that 40–50% of undergraduate students could not correctly identify plagiarized writing, indicating a lack of awareness or training. (Ntihirageza, Uworwabayeho, and Nizeyimana 2022, p. 112)

Plagiarism in Research

- A 2023 post on X claimed that around 33% of neuroscience studies and 24% of medical journal studies were “made up or plagiarized,” though this is unverified and should be treated with caution; (@SciIntegrityWatch, 2023, November 15)
- In African biomedical research, 63% of 495 journal articles (313 articles) showed evidence of plagiarism; (Okonta and Rossouw, 2021, p. 8)
- Self-plagiarism is a growing issue, with 33% of researchers admitting to reusing their own work without proper acknowledgment. (Stretton et al., 2022, p. 8)

The striking statistics on the prevalence of academic plagiarism reveal a pervasive issue within educational institutions. However, understanding the extent of this problem prompts a deeper question: what factors are driving the rise in plagiarism? By examining the underlying reasons, we can better comprehend the motivations and pressures that contribute to this growing challenge in academic integrity.

Etiology of plagiarism: Underlying causes

Notwithstanding the deterrent disciplinary policies of colleges and universities towards plagiarism, the latter is on the rise, and it is an increasingly widespread practice in the educational and research fields. As lot of studies and researches have conducted on the phenomenon, the causes of plagiarism can be categorized into pedagogic, personal, and sociological.

Pedagogic

- **Lack of understanding of research methodology:** Students who plagiarize unintentionally are, of course, not familiar with proper ways of quoting, paraphrasing, citing and referencing. In addition, the lack of explanations and clarifications on how to fulfill an academic work provokes ignorance among students and consequently leads to plagiarism. In fact, a lack of understanding of research methodology among students can contribute to plagiarism in several ways:
 - **Inability to Paraphrase Effectively:** Students unfamiliar with research methodology may struggle to synthesize and rephrase information in their own words. Without understanding how to critically engage with sources, they may resort to copying text directly, leading to unintentional or deliberate plagiarism;
 - **Poor Source Evaluation Skills:** Research methodology teaches students how to identify credible sources and integrate them appropriately. Without this knowledge, students may misuse sources, fail to cite them properly, or rely on low-quality or unverified content, increasing the risk of plagiarism;
 - **Misunderstanding Citation Practices:** A weak grasp of research methodology often includes confusion about citation styles and conventions. Students may not know when or how to cite sources, leading to accidental plagiarism or failure to give proper credit;
 - **Pressure to Produce Work Without Skills:** Students who do not understand how to conduct research may feel overwhelmed by academic demands. This can lead to desperation, prompting them to copy others' work to meet deadlines or expectations;
 - **Unawareness of Plagiarism Consequences:** Ignorance of research ethics, a key component of methodology, can lead students to underestimate the seriousness of plagiarism or fail to recognize certain actions as plagiarism;

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- **Time management:** Poor time management can lead to plagiarism among students when individuals, often under pressure from deadlines, resort to copying others' work to complete tasks quickly. This; in fact, happens as follows:
 - **Procrastination:** Delaying tasks leaves insufficient time to research, write, or create original work, pushing individuals to borrow or copy existing material without proper attribution;
 - **Last-Minute Pressure:** Tight deadlines due to poor planning can lead to panic, where individuals might copy content from sources like websites, books, or peers to meet submission requirements;
 - **Lack of Preparation:** Inadequate time allocated for understanding or processing information can result in over-reliance on source material, leading to unintentional plagiarism (e.g., failing to paraphrase or cite properly);
 - **Prioritizing Quantity Over Quality:** Rushing to complete assignments may cause individuals to cut corners, such as using pre-written work or failing to verify the originality of their content;
 - **Stress and Overwhelm:** Mismanaging multiple tasks or commitments can create stress, reducing the mental capacity to engage in original thinking or proper research, increasing the temptation to plagiarize.
- **Effective teaching methodologies:** Teaching research methodology to university students should focus on promoting the teaching of critical thinking skills and academic integrity. Besides, there should be qualified teachers assigned to teach the subject of research methodology;
- **The type of works demanded:** This; in fact, proves to be not very creative and which provokes to choose the easiest way, something “already done”. Also, the majority of works are theoretical ones of compilation nature, and this encourages copying;
- **Lack of coordination among teachers:** They demand similar works for different subject;
- **The Internet has made plagiarism easier for students:** The Internet has significantly facilitated plagiarism for students by providing easy access to vast amounts of information, tools, and services that enable copying or repurposing content with minimal effort. Specific ways are outlined below, supported by examples and common student behaviors:
 - **Easy Access to Online Content:** The Internet hosts an immense repository of academic materials, articles, essays, and user-generated content that students can copy directly or paraphrase with little effort. (Eret and Ok, 2020, p. 112; Lancaster, 2022, p. 6). Platforms like Wikipedia, online journals, blogs, and educational websites (e.g., Spark Notes, CliffsNotes) provide summaries, analyses, and full-text resources. Search engines like Google allow students to find relevant content instantly by entering keywords. For example, a student writing a paper on Shakespeare's *Hamlet* can copy a plot summary or character

analysis from Spark Notes or a blog post without citing it. Free essay repositories like FreeEssay.com or StudyMode offer pre-written papers on common topics (e.g., ‘The American Dream in *The Great Gatsby*’) that students can download and submit as their own (Perkins, Gezgin, and Roe et al., 2023, p. 15; Rettinger and Gallant, 2023, p. 88).

The common behaviors that students do are (1) copy-pasting entire paragraphs or essays from websites without attribution, (2) paraphrasing content from online sources using minimal rewording to avoid detection, and (3) use question-and-answer platforms like Chegg or Course Hero to find answers to homework or exam questions and submitting them verbatim. (Sefcik, Striepe, and Yorke, 2020, p. 45)

- **Essay Mills and Contract Cheating Services:** The Internet has given rise to commercial platforms that sell custom-written essays or assignments, enabling students to outsource their work entirely. Websites like EssayPro, PapersOwl, or UK Essays offer "custom" essays tailored to specific prompts for a fee. These services market themselves as ‘plagiarism-free’ because the work is original, but submitting it violates academic integrity as it’s not the student’s own effort. (Lancaster and Clarke, 2020, p. 115; Newton, 2023, p. 4).

A student might pay \$50–\$200 for a 1,000-word essay on climate change, complete with references, and submit it as their own work. Some platforms allow students to hire "experts" to complete assignments, take online quizzes, or even entire courses. In this regard, students purchase pre-written or custom essays from essay mills and submitting them under their own name. They use freelance platforms like Fiverr or Upwork to hire writers for academic tasks. Also, they engage in ‘contract cheating,’ where students outsource assignments to third parties found through online ads or social media. (Ellis, Zucker, and Randall, 2022, p. 892; Quality Assurance Agency, 2023, p. 12)

- **Advanced Paraphrasing Tools:** AI-powered tools and paraphrasing software make it easier for students to rephrase existing content to evade plagiarism detection software. Tools like QuillBot, Grammarly, or Spinbot can rewrite text by changing words, sentence structures, or phrasing while retaining the original meaning. These tools are often free or low-cost and accessible online. A student copies a paragraph from a JSTOR article, runs it through QuillBot to rephrase it, and submits the altered version without citing the source. (Rogers, 2023, p. 215; Weber-Wulff, Köhler, and Möller, 2023, p. 7)

AI tools like ChatGPT can generate essays or answers based on prompts, which students may use as a foundation or submit directly. Students use paraphrasing tools to rewrite content from academic sources or websites to bypass plagiarism checkers like Turnitin or SafeAssign. They also rely on AI chatbots to generate responses to essay prompts or homework questions and tweaking them slightly

before submission. They combine outputs from multiple AI tools to create a "unique" paper without original thought. (Cotton, Cotton, and Shipway, 2023, p. 3; Perkins, Roe, and Postma, 2024, p. 12)

- **File-Sharing and Peer-to-Peer Plagiarism:** The Internet enables students to share or access assignments, notes, or completed work through digital platforms, fostering collaborative cheating. Platforms like Google Drive, Dropbox, or social media groups (e.g., Discord, WhatsApp) allow students to share files instantly (Stephens, Watson, and Alansari, 2021, p. 34; Rettinger, Wang, and Lupo, 2022, p. 112). Websites like Quizlet or Course Hero host user-uploaded study materials, including past exams or assignments. A student accesses a Google Doc shared in a class group chat containing answers to a take-home exam and copies them. On Course Hero, a student finds a completed lab report for a biology experiment and submits a slightly modified version. In this regard, students (1) share completed assignments via cloud storage or messaging apps for others to copy, (2) download assignments or exam solutions from file-sharing platforms and submitting them as original work, and (3) collaborate in online study groups to divide up assignments, where each student completes part of the work and shares it with others. (Clarke and Lancaster, 2023, p. 7; Sotiriadou, Logan, and Daly, 2020, p. 15)

- **Lack of deterrence:** For certain students, the advantages of plagiarism surpass the dangers, especially if they believe that there is little to no chance of being caught and that there will be little to no consequences if they are caught.

Personal

- **Plagiarism is the result of students who are unwilling to learn**
Most students do not plagiarize intentionally. In fact, students' laziness when accomplishing the works, relegating them to the last moment, lead them to search for the easy way out of their assignments. Their desire to get good grades, fear of falling, and the feeling not to be caught are the reasons that students believe in to conduct plagiarism in their assignments. They are unaware of the value it gives to their education the fulfillment of a personal and own work. Therefore, acting in that way is the proof that students who plagiarize have no intention to learn seriously;
- **Defiance:** Students who plagiarize view plagiarism a manifestation of disapproval and disrespect for authority. Additionally, they might think the task is not difficult or significant;
- **Teacher and class attitudes:** Some students plagiarize because they have a bad attitude about assignments and tasks that teachers believe have purpose but do not. The reason for this is

the absence of trust between students and teachers, as students in classes where cheating is more common feel that their teachers do not check or read their work;

- **Lack of abilities for planning and time management:** Students are faced with the volume of assignments to accomplish in all the subjects;
- **Lack of interest and motivation:** This; in fact, may be caused by finding themselves in a study programme which was not among their priorities, but which constituted the only option of taking university studies, because their expectations were different from the educational programmes offered, or because they do not know how to tackle their works and/or they do not understand the purpose of the works, etc.

Socio- cultural

- **The prevalence of plagiarism is the result of a dishonest society**
Dishonesty includes all acts without honesty; such as, cheating, lying, being deliberately deceptive, being corrupt, or treacherous. Usually, it is a moral infraction and socially reviled behavior. Since university is more attached to society, there is a strong causal relationship between them. i. e. university affects society in the fact that researches are directed to guide and correct society for better improving social living conditions. On the other hand, society can affect university if it becomes corrupt and dishonest. In the case of plagiarism which prevails in most colleges and universities of the world is an indication of societies have become corrupt and dishonest; such as, societies of the third world countries. The claim that plagiarism's prevalence stems from a dishonest society is supported by factors contributing to plagiarism, how they might reflect societal dishonesty. The studies below offer insights:

- A 2010 study by the Journal of Academic Ethics found that 60% of college students in the U.S. admitted to some form of cheating, including plagiarism, during their academic careers; (Rettinger and Kramer, 2009, p. 89)
- A 2019 Turnitin report noted that 15% of student submissions globally showed significant plagiarized content (over 20% unoriginal text); ('The Integrity of Originality', 2019, p. 10).
- Online platforms like Chegg and Course Hero have reported millions of users accessing solutions, with some studies suggesting 20-30% of students use these for unoriginal submissions. (Newton, 2021, p. 5)

These numbers suggest plagiarism is common, and they show a symptom of a 'dishonest society.' Other factors contribute to the claim:

- **Cultural and Societal Factors:** A society's values shape attitudes toward honesty and intellectual property. Several cultural dynamics link plagiarism to broader societal behaviors:

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- **Pressure for Success:** In hyper-competitive cultures, success (grades, degrees, publications) often trumps process. For example, in high-stakes academic systems like those in the U.S. or China, students may prioritize outcomes over ethics. A 2015 International Journal for Educational Integrity study found that 68% of students in competitive academic environments justified plagiarism as a means to ‘get ahead’ (Bokosmaty, S., Ehrich, J., Eady, M.J. et al., 2015, p. 8);
- **Educational System Failures:** The education system plays a significant role in plagiarism’s prevalence, reflecting societal issues:
- **Lack of Ethical Training:** Many students lack clear instruction on what constitutes plagiarism. A 2017 Plagiarism Across Europe and Beyond conference report found that only 40% of surveyed institutions provided comprehensive plagiarism education; (Eretto, 2017, p. 12)
- **High Stakes and Low Support:** Overburdened students, especially in under-resourced schools, may resort to plagiarism due to time constraints or inadequate support. For example, a 2020 Chronicle of Higher Education article highlighted how students working full-time jobs alongside studies were more likely to plagiarize to manage workloads; (Berrett, 2020, p. 15)
- **Grade Inflation and Credentialism:** Society’s obsession with credentials over learning incentivizes cheating. A 2018 Times Higher Education study noted that grade inflation in universities correlates with higher plagiarism rates, as students focus on grades rather than mastery. (Gilliland, 2018, p. 14) These systemic issues suggest that societal structures—prioritizing outcomes over integrity—enable plagiarism and turn society to be a dishonesty one.
- **Technological Enablers:** Technology has amplified plagiarism’s prevalence, reflecting societal reliance on digital tools:
- **Access to Information:** The internet provides endless sources for copying, from Wikipedia to academic databases. A 2021 Nature article estimated that 25% of academic papers contain some unoriginal text due to easy access to digital content; (Hutson, 2021, p. 556)
- **AI and Text Generators:** Tools like ChatGPT or earlier AI models can generate essays instantly. A 2023 Inside Higher Ed report found that 17% of college students admitted using AI tools to complete assignments without attribution, blurring the line between assistance and plagiarism. (Lewin, 2023)

Technology reflects societal values: convenience and results often outweigh ethical considerations, fostering an environment where plagiarism is easier and more tempting.

It is worth mentioning that the reasons behind academic plagiarism stem from pressures, such as academic competition, inadequate citation knowledge, and the ease of accessing online content. To overcome the issue of plagiarism, it is essential to shift focus toward actionable solutions. Practical strategies to avoid plagiarism empower students and scholars to uphold academic integrity by fostering skills in

proper citation, effective research habits, and ethical writing practices. Understanding the causes of academic plagiarism to exploring preventive measures highlights proactive steps that can be taken to maintain originality and credibility in academic work.

Proposed corrective strategies to avoid plagiarism

University rankings and reputations are not at risk due to plagiarism. They must take significant action to guarantee the caliber of universities. Furthermore, they must ensure that their policies for assessment are sufficient to analyze their assessment in terms of validity, reliability, and fairness. The following strategies can be practically used in order to avoid plagiarism:

Educational and curricula reform

With the growing phenomenon of academic plagiarism, colleges and universities are called to revise their educational policies in relation to research. This should be achieved through revising their curricula. In relation research conduct, the emphasis should be on the last year of undergraduate stage where students should be required to present research proposals for their future graduate studies. These proposals will be seriously examined and analyzed by research committees at universities, and students' success to enroll in postgraduate studies will be measured on these proposals.

Since plagiarism remains a significant challenge in higher education, affecting academic integrity and institutional reputation, universities worldwide should implement various policy changes, such as educational programs, honor codes, and plagiarism detection tools to mitigate this issue. One of the most concrete examples is British University Vietnam (BUV), which introduced the Academic English Masterclass (AEM) in April 2016. This educational intervention was designed to enhance students' academic writing skills and understanding of plagiarism, addressing root causes rather than just penalizing misconduct. Over 12 semesters, from April 2016 to December 2019, BUV analyzed 12,937 student submissions. The mean plagiarism rate dropped from 4.81% (based on 3,137 submissions) to 3.03% (based on 9,800 submissions), representing a 37.01% reduction (Perkins, Gezgin, and Roe, 2020, p. 6). This significant decrease highlights the effectiveness of targeted educational policies in reducing plagiarism.

Beyond specific cases, broader research suggests that universities have collectively responded to plagiarism challenges, particularly during global crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. A 2024 study in the *International Journal for Educational Integrity* examined plagiarism rates across 42 academic institutions, comparing data from 2019, 2020, and 2023. The findings indicated that plagiarism rates increased from 22.3% pre-pandemic to 33.8% during the pandemic, but decreased to 24.8% post-pandemic, though still higher than pre-COVID levels (Eshet, 2025, p. 11). This

‘bouncing-back’ trend is attributed to institutional policies, such as the mandatory use of plagiarism detection tools and the development of emergency teaching plans. While the study does not detail specific policy changes for each institution, it implies that enhanced academic writing literacy and faculty support played a role in mitigating plagiarism post-pandemic, aligning with the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991, p. 185; Ajzen, 2020, p. 319).

Additional research supported the effectiveness of structured educational modules and policy modifications in reducing plagiarism. Perkins, Gezgin, and Roe (2020) found that teaching academic integrity to first-year law students through structured modules led to lower plagiarism rates (p. 9). These studies underscore the importance of proactive educational strategies, complementing the BUV case.

Assessment Redesign

Institutions should offer workshops through writing centers or student success programs to teach citation styles (e.g., APA, MLA) and paraphrasing techniques. For example, Brandeis University’s Writing Center provides graduate-student consultants to support academic writing, while Northern Illinois University offers online tutorials on avoiding plagiarism (‘Univeristy Writing Center,’ 2025, para. 6). These resources help students develop skills to express ideas in their own words and cite sources correctly.

Enhancing Classroom Discussions

Faculty should discuss plagiarism openly in class to reduce its taboo nature. Providing examples of plagiarized versus properly cited work helps students understand expectations. Universities worldwide should recommend talking about plagiarism and showing students how to avoid it through practical examples, which can be integrated into course syllabi or early-semester discussions.

Clear and Enforced Institutional Policies

Students are expected to follow strict codes of conduct that emphasize academic integrity, including bans on plagiarism, especially those attending colleges and universities. Colleges and universities should be dealing seriously with the phenomenon of plagiarism by enacting strict laws against plagiarism; such as, excluding students from studying in all universities and revoking their diplomas. Policies must also evolve to address emerging challenges like AI-generated content.

Emphasizing personal integrity to prevent plagiarism

In revising their teaching curricula, colleges and universities should consider the teaching of research methodology as a primary subject in the teaching curricula. Also, it should be closely related to academic honesty, creativity, and personal integrity.

Institutions must establish and communicate clear policies defining plagiarism and its consequences. For example, Saint Leo University's Academic Honor Code emphasizes that students must submit "genuinely their own" work. Policies should also address emerging issues, such as the use of AI tools like ChatGPT, which many universities consider academic misconduct if unacknowledged. A 2023 review of 100 UK universities found that 61% lacked clear AI guidelines, highlighting the need for updated policies.

Using Plagiarism Detection Tools

Software like *Turnitin*, *iThenticate*, and *PlagScan* are widely used to detect plagiarism by comparing submissions against databases of texts. Turnitin, for instance, provides 'originality reports' that help students revise drafts and understand plagiarism. For example, the Jordan University of Science and Technology and Yarmouk University use iThenticate and Turnitin, respectively, for faculty and student submissions (Rahman, Danno, Wase, and Isla, 2025, p. 2090). However, a 2020 study testing 15 text-matching systems found that while some identify plagiarized content, they miss sophisticated cases and may flag non-plagiarized work, necessitating a balanced approach (Foltýnek, Dlabolová, Anohina-Naumeca, Razi, and Kravjar 2020, p. 6).

Using AI Detection Tools

The rise of AI-generated content has prompted the development of AI-focused plagiarism detectors. However, these tools can be unreliable, sometimes flagging original work or exhibiting biases, particularly against non-native English speakers. Common Sense Education noted that banning AI outright is counterproductive, as students need to develop AI literacy. Instead, institutions should teach ethical AI use and integrate detection tools as part of a broader strategy. ('How to help prevent AI use for plagiarism,' 2023, para. 4)

In addition to practical strategies to avoid plagiarism, it is clear that maintaining academic integrity requires deliberate effort and adherence to ethical standards. These practices not only safeguard the credibility of research works, but also foster a culture of respect for intellectual contributions.

Conclusion

The current practice of plagiarism in colleges and universities has risen lot of controversial, ethical issues in the research fields and academia. The prevalence of plagiarism in the scientific community has been exacerbated by (1) the rapid expansion of knowledge, (2) the rapid growth of scientific journals, (3) the rapid advancement of information technology, (4) a lack of clear definitions and interpretations of plagiarism, (5) a lack of awareness, (6) poor time management, and (7) a low cultural level. The research community, colleges, and universities have actually been alarmed by this and have responded. For the different sectors to take part in defining the phenomenon, cooperation becomes essential. One way to

combat plagiarism is to implement appropriate policies, enhance teacher-student interactions, and provide effective prevention through education.

In order to provide a basis for these actions, it is required to conduct further researches and studies on the causes of the said phenomenon which provoke it, and which have already been mentioned in this paper. Moreover, future research should focus on providing effective plagiarism AI detection tools to avoid the practice among graduate students in colleges and universities.

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