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Awareness, Perception and Attitude towards Plagiarism by Distance Learners in University of Ibadan, Nigeria

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The issue of plagiarism by students in higher institutions all over the world continues to be a source of concern to stakeholders. Distance learners could be exposed to plagiarism as they might not have the on-campus academic guidance necessary to avoid plagiarism. Preliminary investigations have revealed that the focus of plagiarism studies in Nigeria has been on undergraduate and postgraduate students in the regular mode of learning. There seems to be a dearth of literature on the issues associated with plagiarism from the distance learners' point of view. This study examines the awareness, perception and attitude towards plagiarism by distance learning students in University of Ibadan, Nigeria. Descriptive survey research method was adopted and the study population consisted of 1762 distance learners in the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. The two-stage random sampling technique was used to select a sample size of 226 and the data collection instrument was the questionnaire. Findings revealed that most of the respondents had a high level of awareness of the various acts that constitute plagiarism (mean=26.53). Majority of the distance learners (89.6%) had a negative perception of plagiarism as they viewed it as a crime. Results also showed that a significant number of the distance learners had a negative attitude towards plagiarism as 90.1% indicated that they will ensure that they duly acknowledge their sources of information. Part of the recommendations was that the management of the distance learning and the university should develop a plagiarism policy that will be given to all the students.

Keywords: Awareness, perception, attitude, plagiarism, distance learners, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Distance learners are students who acquire knowledge and skills in different disciplines outside the conventional school system where there is physical contact between the lecturers and the students and where learning is structured and rigid. Learners who get educated within the distance learning system have the opportunity to

learn from wherever they are, which gives them the opportunity to hold down jobs and study at the same time (Mabawonku, 2004). Distance learning brings flexibility into knowledge acquisition and ensures that individuals are not denied access to education. Most distance learners are matured individuals with family and work responsibilities, yet majority of them have the intrinsic motivation to succeed in their education (Ayorinde, 2001).

However, critical to the academic success of distance learners is the need for them to engage and excel in various academic activities like assignment completion, research, preparation for and writing of examination and also independent study. Distance learners would not be able to achieve all these without the use of information resources in different formats like print, audio-visual and electronic. In fact, Omoregie (2014) noted that distance education is arranged for students to learn at a distance with the use help of a variety of media. The trend presently is to use technology, especially the Internet to facilitate distance education. Otunla (2013) pointed out that the Internet has conquered the barriers of location and time in providing access to information. Through the Internet, distance learners can communicate with their instructors and also access myriads of electronic documents for academic use.

In as much as the Internet has the potential of assisting distance learners in retrieving electronic documents for research activities, it could also expose them to the trap of plagiarism. Oyewole (2017a) stated that the Internet is a useful tool and at the same time it could become detrimental if the ethics guiding the use of other people's words and ideas are jettisoned. Distance learners are especially at risk, because of not being on campus, they might not be familiar with plagiarism and its attendant consequences. In addition, their perceived busy activities in the face of deadlines for the submission of research reports and term papers could lure them into plagiarism. Park (2003) defined plagiarism as the act of stealing others' ideas and presenting them as one's own thought. Plagiarism is an unethical act that discards the concept of originality but embraces laziness of ideas through the claiming of other people's works and ideas. Hu and Lei (2015) noted that plagiarism is generally regarded as grave academic misconduct and is often associated with unethical acts that are condemnable like deception, cheating, academic crime, intellectual dishonesty and moral failing.

Distance learners could be exposed to various types of plagiarism. An example of this is the act of colluding or collaborating with friends by copying or downloading their papers from the Internet, after which the original names will be removed and replaced with the name of the plagiarists without modifications to the full text (Park, 2004; Roig, 2006). Other forms of plagiarism include copying from the Internet without paraphrasing and due acknowledgement, copying without reference, quoting without acknowledgement, paraphrasing without attribution, using fictitious citations and the act of duplicating one's work known as self plagiarism (Harris, 2001).

Cryptomnesia is another type of plagiarism that could be committed by distance learners. According to Roig (2015), this type of plagiarism is unintentional and could be committed unconsciously. A distance learning student would be guilty of cryptomnesia if he or she uses another person's idea without attribution based on the faulty impression or belief that the idea seems original as a result of frequent usage in different works. Moreover, because cryptomnesia is unintentional does not make the act less serious. This is because it is expected that after students complete the writing of an academic paper regardless of the type, they should be diligent enough to carefully crosscheck in order to submit a write up that is free of plagiarism. On the contrary, this seems not to be the case with some students as they fall victim of proper time management which makes them rush assignment and term papers, giving room for plagiarism so as to meet deadlines (Oyewole, 2017a).

The findings of the studies carried out by different scholars revealed that students' plagiarism in higher institutions seems be on the increase (Hosny and Fatima, 2014, Amiri and Razmjoo, 2015, Babalola, 2012, Maina, et al., 2014). This indicates that the issue of plagiarism is indeed a menace that stakeholders in distance learning education should be concerned about. Oyewole and Abioye (2016) noted that if drastic actions are not taken to address the issue of plagiarism, quality assurance of the education provided could be called into question. However, in order to assist the distance learners to avoid plagiarism, they need to be aware of what plagiarism is and thereafter, they need to display the ideal perception and attitude towards the act.

Awareness refers to the cognitive ability of a person to discern, decipher and judge a given phenomenon (Idiegbeyan-ose, et al., 2016). Reinhardt et al. (2015) noted that awareness refers to the knowledge about an object or event, the competences or skills as well as the methods of operation; it has to do with background knowledge about the object, event or any other phenomenon. It would be quite difficult for the distance learners to act in manner that depicts academic integrity if they are not aware of what constitutes plagiarism. Thus, if the distance learners are aware of the various forms of the unethical act of plagiarism, they might steer clear of them. On the other hand, if their level of awareness is low, they might engage in plagiarism even without knowing they have done so. In addition, the level of awareness of plagiarism could also assist in forming a perception of the act (Oyewole 2017b).

According to the Human Perception and Information Processing (2015), perception is viewed as the process of recognizing, organizing and interpreting sensory

information. It deals with the human senses and generates signals from the environment through the five sense organs: sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste. Perception helps to create a mental picture about a phenomenon. Thus, the perception that distance learners have of plagiarism could create a positive or negative mental picture which could determine whether they adhere to the ethics of academic writing or not. A distance learner with a perception that favors plagiarism might likely engage in plagiarism, while a student with a negative perception might abhor it. The perception displayed by distance learners towards plagiarism could influence their attitude towards it.

Bohner and Dickel (2011) were of the view that attitude can be defined as the evaluation of an object of thought by an individual. Such an object could be typified by anything a person may hold in mind, which could be mundane or abstract in nature like things, people, groups and ideas. This implies that attitude itself is not tangible, but its manifestations reveal the stance of an individual towards an object which could be tangible or intangible. Attitude towards an object of thought could be positive or negative. Thus, if a distance learner displays a positive attitude towards plagiarism, it means he or she favors the act. On the other hand, a negative attitude towards plagiarism reveals that a distance learner views plagiarism as an act that should be avoided. It is important to examine the attitude of distance learner towards plagiarism there is a nexus between attitude and actual behavior. This means that the attitude displayed by distance learners could determine whether they would plagiarize or not.

From the foregoing, it has become evident that the tide of plagiarism needs to be stemmed, because it is an act that could erode values like honesty and integrity associated with academic writing. In ensuring that distance learners are helped to steer clear of plagiarism, it is important to examine their level of awareness of the act and the type of perception and attitude they display towards it. This will provide insights into what should be done by stakeholders like the management of higher institutions that offer distance education, librarians and course facilitators in promoting academic integrity. It is based on this that this study is set to examine the awareness, perception and attitude towards plagiarism by distance learners in University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The issue of plagiarism by students in higher institutions all over the world continues to be a source of concern for lecturers and those in the position of management in these institutions. This is as a result of the seemingly prevalent rate of the practice of this unethical act by students in the ivory towers. Distance learners especially

run the risk of engaging in plagiarism as they are on their own most of the time, and as such they might be without the needed academic guidance necessary to avoid plagiarism. Thus, it could be difficult for them to have a negative perception and attitude towards plagiarism, since they might not even be aware that they are committing an academic crime.

Even though the issue of plagiarism in Nigerian universities has been researched by some scholars, preliminary investigations revealed that much of the studies carried out focused on undergraduate and postgraduate students in the regular mode of learning. There seems to be a dearth of literature on the issues associated with plagiarism from the distance learners' point of view. It is based on this backdrop that this study examines the awareness, perception and attitude towards plagiarism by distance learning students in University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study will be guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the level of awareness of the various acts that constitute plagiarism by distance learning students of University of Ibadan?
2. What is the perception of plagiarism by distance learning students of University of Ibadan?
3. What is the attitude of distance learning students towards plagiarism in University of Ibadan?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of literature is aimed at providing empirical insights into the focus of the study. Due to the dearth of literature on distance learners and plagiarism, the literature review will adopt the funnel approach. With the use of this approach, the broad views of university students in general on issues associated with plagiarism will be considered and inferences drawn for distance learners. The literature review will be discussed in three subheadings. The first will focus on the awareness of plagiarism by university students. The second and third will review literature on the perception and attitude of university students towards plagiarism.

Awareness of plagiarism by university students

University students would find it difficult to avoid plagiarism if they are not aware of what constitutes plagiarism. Studies have provided insights into the level of awareness of undergraduates about plagiarism. Hosny

and Fatima (2014) carried out a study on the attitude of students towards cheating and plagiarism in King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The respondents included 115 undergraduate students and 25 Masters Students who anonymously answered the plagiarism survey. Results revealed that 72.17% of the respondents acknowledged that they were aware of what plagiarism is and 11.3% affirmed that they were not aware. In addition, 16.52% were uncertain. It is obvious from the results that the level of awareness of plagiarism by the respondents was high.

Guedes and Filho (2015) conducted a study on the perception of academic plagiarism among 199 undergraduates who were studying dentistry at the Universidade Estadual do Sudoeste da Bahia (UESB), Brazil. The questionnaire was used to collect data and subsequent analysis of the responses was done with the use of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). From the findings, the researchers reported that all of the students (100%) stated that plagiarism is indeed a crime and that they were in full support of the Brazilian legislation provided to combat it. This is an indication that the undergraduates were fully aware of plagiarism.

Okere et al. (2016) studied the awareness of plagiarism as copyright violation with implications for intellectual property education in Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria and Redeemers University, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria. The study was cross-sectional in nature in which the researchers conducted four sessions of focus group discussion with eight final year students of mass communication. Results showed that every one of the discussants indicated that they were aware of what plagiarism is and what it stands for. They also acknowledged that plagiarism has really become a menace within academic institutions, and that most students plagiarize without even realizing the implications.

Louw (2017) did a survey that examined the perception of plagiarism by 2414 students of the North-West University Potchefstroom, South Africa. The questionnaire was used to collect data and from the findings, 98.7% of the students noted that they were fully aware that it would amount to plagiarism if a student copies directly from a source without due acknowledgement. Also, almost all the respondents (96.2%) pointed out that they were also aware that the act of buying a paper and submitting it as if it was originally written is plagiarism. These results showed a high level of plagiarism awareness by the students.

Some studies have also reported an average and low level of plagiarism awareness by university students. One of such is the one conducted by Idiegbeyan-Ose et al. (2016) that focused on the awareness and perception of plagiarism by 338 postgraduate students in federal, state and private universities in Ogun State Nigeria. The study was descriptive in nature and the questionnaire was the

research instrument. Findings of the study showed that majority of the respondents 156 (46.2%) had an average level of plagiarism awareness. However, a little above two-fifths of the respondents 140 (41.44%) indicated that their awareness level of plagiarism was high and 42 (12.4%) noted that their awareness of plagiarism was low.

Also, Rhodes et al. (2011) were interested in whether business students in a university in the United States of America can recognize plagiarism or not. The study was exploratory in nature where 67 students with senior level standing who were enrolled in the College of Business capstone course, strategic management were asked to respond to the scenarios presented. Results showed that most of the respondents (46%) were not aware of what plagiarism is and an equally high percentage of students cannot recognize if a work has been plagiarized or not. This is an indication that the level of plagiarism awareness of this set of students was low.

From the review conducted, it is evident that the awareness of plagiarism by distance learners within the Nigerian environment could either be high, moderate or low. The level of awareness of plagiarism is very important as it could determine if they would commit the act or not.

Perception of plagiarism by university students

Some researchers who are interested in examining the perception of plagiarism by university students have carried out studies in this regard. Armstrong and Delbridge (2008) examined the perception of plagiarism by final year students in the Department of Information and Communications (DIC) at an unnamed university. The research instrument for the study was a self completed questionnaire and results revealed that most of the students had a favorable perception of acts that constitute academic integrity rather than plagiarism. The students agreed with the positive statements that 'it is right to give authors credit for their work, that 'plagiarism is wrong' and that 'plagiarism undermines learning and creating their own ideas'. Expectedly, students disagreed with the negative statements like 'getting good grades is more important to me than citing materials and that 'there's no harm involved with plagiarism' and 'winning is more important than honesty'.

Fish and Hura (2013) researched into the perception of students on plagiarism in a large university in the United States of America. The respondents were 334 with 194 undergraduates and 131 postgraduate students. Results showed that almost all of the respondents (96.4%) were of the view that the act of using an entire document by another author could be considered as very serious. In addition, close to four-fifths of the students (78.1%) also noted that the act of using another author's

sentences/paragraphs is equally very serious. A little above half of the respondents (51.8%) also ranked the use of another author phrases as very serious. Therefore, it can be deduced that most of the students did not perceive plagiarism in a positive light.

Similarly, Oyewole (2017b) examined the awareness and perception of 251 undergraduates of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria on issues associated with computer ethics (plagiarism inclusive). The researcher adopted the descriptive research design with the questionnaire as the research instrument. Findings revealed that most of the respondents (mean=2.06) had a negative perception of plagiarism as they noted that it is unjust to copy so many works or ideas from electronic sources up to the point that the copied information makes up the majority of one's work whether due acknowledgment is given or not.

In contrast with the results of earlier studies, Okere et al. (2016) carried out a cross-sectional study in Babcock University, Ogun State Nigeria among final year undergraduate students where their perception of plagiarism was examined. Results from the focus group discussion that was conducted revealed that majority of discussants likened the issue of plagiarism to the garment transfer of Elijah to Elisha in the Bible, indicating that nothing is wrong with using the works of their colleagues in class assignment. This indicates that most of the final year students had a positive perception of plagiarism. In addition, the students were of the view that plagiarism was on the increase and that most students engage in the act without thinking of its implications.

Ayon (2017) also surveyed students' and instructors' perceptions of Turnitin as a deterrent to plagiarism at a private Lebanese English-speaking university. The students who were undergraduates (95 senior, 36 junior, 3 sophomore and 3 freshmen) were one hundred and thirty seven and data was collected both quantitatively with the use of questionnaire and qualitatively through interview. The quantitative result revealed that close to three-fifths of the students (56.8%) pointed out that they had intentionally plagiarized before or knew someone who had. Based on this the researcher noted that "quite a number of student participants seemed to be tolerant of plagiarizing behavior" (Ayon, 2017). The students during the interview identified lack of writing skills, academic pressure and the need to achieve higher grades as reasons why they engaged in plagiarism.

The review of literature has revealed a variation in the perception of plagiarism by university students. Thus, it is expected that the distance learners' perception of plagiarism could be one that favors plagiarism or one that repels it. Their perception could determine the attitude they will display towards plagiarism.

Attitude of university students towards plagiarism

Schrimsher et al. (2011) surveyed the attitudes of 557

undergraduate students towards the issue of plagiarism and academic misconduct at Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama, United States of America. From the findings, 96.9% of the undergraduates affirmed that the act of submitting a paper written by someone else in whole or in part is a grievous academic misconduct. In addition, almost all the undergraduates (97%) felt it was unacceptable for students to copy texts from the Internet and submit such as an original work for assignments and term papers without due acknowledgement. This reveals that most of the undergraduates had a negative attitude towards the unethical act of plagiarism.

Onuoha (2016) examined undergraduates' attitude to plagiarism and their personal information management behavior in Babcock University, Ogun State Nigeria. The population of students consisted of 214 students of the Department of Information Resource Management and the questionnaire was the data collection instrument. Results revealed that most of the respondents had a negative attitude towards plagiarism, as they rejected the statements which seemed to uphold plagiarism. Specifically, a significant number of the respondents (69.3%) rejected the idea that students who plagiarize are not doing the society any harm. In addition, (65.8%) of the respondents rejected the idea that the system of recycling information should be encouraged.

Contrary to the results of the two studies cited earlier, Ting (2013) also studied 169 second year undergraduates' attitude towards plagiarism in a university in Malaysia. Results showed that from the point of view of most of the students, plagiarism should not be considered as a serious academic offense that should attract heavy sanctions. In fact, a high number of respondents (89.94%) indicated that if a student plagiarizes, he or she should only be warned by the lecturers. Also, well over four-fifths (88.17%) submitted that plagiarists should be given another opportunity to resubmit a plagiarized assignment and 81.07% were of the view that any student who plagiarizes should be counseled. The responses of the students reveal their lax attitude towards plagiarism.

Walcott (2016) conducted a study that examined the attitudes of 90 second year computer science undergraduates towards plagiarism in Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago and St. Vincent, all in the Caribbean. The questionnaire was used to collect data and findings revealed that a significant number of the undergraduates (80%) noted that they find it difficult to duly acknowledge other people's words. In the type of situation, the students seem to be incapacitated as regards how to give attribution to the ideas that are not theirs. This is an indication that this set of students might have an attitude that could be favorably disposed towards plagiarism.

It is quite clear that based on the review conducted in this subheading, distance learners could either have a

positive attitude towards plagiarism or a negative one. This might ultimately have a bearing on their actual behavior as far as plagiarism is concerned.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Situation Awareness Theory and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) are the theories that relate to the variables in the study. These theories will shed light and provide insights into the variables of study.

Situation Awareness Theory

The root of Situation Awareness could be traced to the early 20th century especially during the First World War when Oswald Boelke coined the construct as a result of the realization that gaining awareness before the enemies gained theirs is important (Winsen et al., 2015). However this theory was made popular by Mica Endsley who built on its earlier beginnings. According to Endsley (1995), situation awareness can be defined as "knowing what's going on…and the perception of the elements in the environment within a volume of time and space, the comprehension of their meaning and the projection of their status in the near future". Some scholars have applied this theory to the study of plagiarism (Idiegbeyan-Ose et al. 2016; Starovoytova and Namango 2017).

This theory is relevant to this study because it highlights the importance of the concepts of awareness and perception of a phenomenon like plagiarism. Thus, a distance learner that knows what is going on as far as academic writing is concerned cannot feign ignorance of plagiarism. He or she should be aware of the various acts that constitute plagiarism and the position of the management of the institution on them. In addition, after the distance learners are aware of plagiarism, they need to examine the perception of concerned stakeholders like lecturers and the management, as this will assist them to form their own informed perception. So, a distance learner who applies Situation Awareness Theory might display an attitude that abhors plagiarism.

Theory of Planned Behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) was propounded by Icek Ajzen. The constructs in TPB that predict intention and actual behavior are; attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, intention and actual behavior. According to Ajzen and Fishbein (2000), attitude has to do with an evaluation of an object or behavior with a view to establish how favorable and unfavorable it is. While subject norm refers to the pressure that is exerted by the society as far as a

behavior is concerned and perceived behavioral control relates to the ease or difficulty associated with displaying a particular behavior based on previous experience and expected challenges.

This theory is relevant to the present study because it highlights the importance of attitude in developing an intention and the actual behavior. The theory reveals that the attitude displayed towards plagiarism by distance learners can go all the way to determine whether they would have the intention to plagiarize and eventually commit the offense or not. This means that if distance learners display a negative attitude towards plagiarism, it is expected that they will behave in a manner that depicts academic integrity. On the other hand, if the attitude is positive, there is a high tendency that they will engage in plagiarism.

METHODOLOGY

The population of this study consisted of distance learners (100 and 200 levels) who were undergoing undergraduate programs in the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. These students were in the six departments that got accreditation to run the various programs in the 2015/2016 academic session. According to the data collected personally from the Records Office of the Distance Learning Centre by the researchers, there were 1,762 undergraduate students who were offered admission at both 100 and 200 levels in these departments and this number forms the population for the study (Table 1). In order to get the sample size, the two stage random sampling technique was used. At the first stage, 60% of the accredited departments were randomly selected with the use of the balloting method (simple random sampling). With this, four departments were chosen. The second stage involved the selection of the sample size from the four departments through the use of 20% sampling fraction. Thus, the total sample size for the study was 226 (Table 2).

The questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection and was developed based on the review of the relevant literature. The instrument was validated by subject experts in the Department of Library, Archival and Information Studies, University of Ibadan, before administration. Data was analyzed with the use of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPPS) version 20 and presented in form of descriptive statistics of frequency counts, percentages, mean and standard deviation.

RESULTS

A total of 226 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the distance learners in the University of

Table 1. Population of the study

Departments	Number of distance learners
Philosophy	87
English	140
Social work	191
Economics	474
Political science	432
Psychology	438
Total	**1762**

Table 2. Sample size for the study

Departments	Number of distance learners	Sample size (20%)
Economics	474	95
English	140	28
Philosophy	87	17
Political science	432	86
Total	**1133**	**226**

Table 3. Questionnaire administration and return rate

Selected Departments	Distribution	Return
Economics	95	86
English Language	28	20
Philosophy	17	15
Political Science	86	81
Total	**226**	**202**

Ibadan across the four departments. However, 202 copies were returned and found useful for analysis giving a response rate of 89%. (Table 3).

Demographic characteristics of respondents

Table 4 revealed that majority of the distance learning undergraduate students 63 (31.2%) were between 26-30 years of age and only an individual 1 (0.5%) noted that his or her age fell between 46-50. There were more male distance learners 110 (54.5%) than their female counterparts 92 (45.5%). The respondents also included 141 (69.8%) who were Christians and 58 (28.7%) who practiced Islam. There were also individuals 3 (1.5%) who were adherents of the African Traditional Religion. Results on the marital status revealed that close of three-fifths of the respondents 119 (58.9%) were single, as 5 (2.5%) pointed out that they had undergone separation. Findings on the demographic information also showed that a significant number of respondents 61 (30.2%) noted that they were self-employed, while 39 (19.3%) indicated that they were employed in the private sector.

Answers to research questions

Research question one: What is the level of awareness of the various acts that constitute plagiarism by distance learning students of University of Ibadan?

Table 5 presented the level of awareness of the various acts that constitute plagiarism by the respondents. In order to determine the level of plagiarism awareness, a test of norm of conducted (see appendix). The scale between 0-11 shows that the level of plagiarism awareness is low, the scale between 12-24 indicates that the awareness level of plagiarism is moderate and the scale between 25-36 shows that the level of plagiarism awareness is high. Thus, the overall mean for awareness of plagiarism acts as indicated by the responses of the distance learning undergraduate students is 26.53 which fall between the scale "25-36". Therefore it could be deduced that the level of awareness of plagiarism acts by most of the distance learners in University of Ibadan is high.

An indication of this high level of awareness can be seen from Table 5 as majority of the respondents clearly indicated that they were highly aware that copying from

Table 4. Demographic information of respondents

Demographic characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
16 - 30	141	69.8
31 - 45	60	29.7
46 – 60	1	0.5
Gender		
Male	110	54.5
Female	92	45.5
Religion		
Christianity	141	69.8
Islam	58	28.7
African Traditional Religion	3	1.5
Marital Status		
Single	119	58.9
Married	78	38.6
Separated	5	2.5
Employment Status		
Employed by the government	53	26.2
Self employed	61	30.2
Employed in the private sector	39	19.3
Not employed	49	24.3

N=202

Table 5. Awareness of the various acts that constitute plagiarism by distance learners

Plagiarism acts	Highly Aware Freq %		Moderately Aware Freq %		Slightly Aware Freq %		Not Aware Freq %		Mean SD
Copying a paper from another student	86	42.6	57	28.2	36	17.8	23	11.4	3.02 1.03
Copying from the internet	101	50.0	58	28.7	35	17.3	8	4.0	3.25 0.88
Cutting and pasting from different sources	80	39.6	71	35.1	32	15.8	19	9.4	3.05 0.97
Quoting without acknowledgment	83	41.1	63	31.2	30	14.9	26	12.9	3.00 1.04
Quoting without paraphrasing and changing some words	68	33.7	69	34.2	44	21.8	21	10.4	2.91 0.98
Paraphrasing without attribution	71	35.1	57	28.2	53	26.2	21	10.4	2.88 1.01
Summary without attribution	62	30.7	64	31.7	53	26.2	23	11.4	2.82 0.99
Use of fake citation	53	26.2	60	29.7	49	24.3	40	19.8	2.62 1.08
Duplicating work for more than one submission without references	83	41.1	63	31.2	24	11.9	32	15.8	2.98 1.08
Overall mean score									**26.53**

the Internet (mean=3.25), cutting and pasting from different sources (mean=3.05), copying a paper from another student (mean=3.02) and quoting without acknowledge (mean=3.00) all amount to plagiarism. This result further confirms that majority of the distance learning students are not ignorant of the various acts that could constitute plagiarism.

Research question two: What is the perception of plagiarism by distance learning students of University of Ibadan?

Table 6 presented result on the respondents' perception of plagiarism. For ease of presentation, strongly agree and agree were merged to become agree and strongly disagree and disagree were also merged to become disagree. Findings showed that majority of the distance learning undergraduate students had a positive perception about the need for them to become weary of plagiarism. This conclusion was arrived at because 181 (89.6%) of the respondents expressed that plagiarism is an academic crime, 168 (83.2%) agreed that plagiarism is an act that shows lack of integrity, 155 (76.7%) concurred that plagiarism shows lack of character and also 151 (74.7%) noted that plagiarism is a display of laziness.

Research question three: What is the attitude of distance learning students towards plagiarism in University of Ibadan?

Table 7 presented result on the attitude of distance learners towards plagiarism. For ease of presentation, strongly agree and agree were merged to become agree and strongly disagree and disagree were also merged to become disagree. Findings revealed a very high number of the distance learners 182 (90.1%) pledged that they will ensure that they give acknowledgement which is due at all times. In addition, a little above four-fifths of the respondents 168 (83.2%) affirmed that even though they had plagiarized before, they will not do it again. While, 169 (83.6%) agreed that they will not plagiarize because it is an academic crime. Thus, the results revealed that most of the distance learners had a negative attitude towards plagiarism.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Results showed that there was a high level of plagiarism awareness by majority of the distance learners in the University of Ibadan. This could be as a result of the efforts of some of the course facilitators who had drawn the attention of these students to what the meaning of plagiarism, its various forms and the dangers associated with plagiarizing. This aligns with the Situation Awareness Theory as the responses of the distance learners revealed that they were aware of what is going as far as plagiarism is concerned. This also agrees with findings of Hosny and Fatima (2014) among students in Saudi Arabia and that of Louw (2017) carried out in South Africa where they reported that most of their respondents had a high level of plagiarism awareness. On the

contrary, results of the studies carried out by Idiegbeyan-Ose et al. (2016) in private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria and that of Rhodes et al. (2011) in the United States of America revealed that majority of the students had a low level of awareness of plagiarism.

Findings revealed that most of the respondents had a positive perception of the need to be conscious of plagiarism as an academic crime. The favorable perception could be as a result of their understanding of what plagiarism is. Since they had the knowledge that failure to abide by the ethical principles guiding scholarly writing comes with sanctions, they had to develop a positive perception towards its avoidance. This supports the results of the study done by Fish and Hura (2013) where most of the students in a United States university had a negative perception of plagiarism. Also, the findings of the study conducted by Oyewole (2017b) among undergraduates of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria also corroborated the result of this study as a significant number of the respondents also had a negative perception of plagiarism as they considered it unjust. This has also validated the Situation Awareness Theory as perhaps one of the reasons why the distance learners were able to display a negative perception of plagiarism was because they took the views of the lecturers and management on plagiarism into consideration.

Most of the respondents had a negative attitude towards plagiarism. This implies that majority of the distance learners given the right circumstances and environment, would avoid plagiarism. This upholds the tenets of the Theory of Planned Behavior that consider attitude as an important construct in predicting actual behavior. A negative attitude towards plagiarism could lead to the avoidance of the act and vice versa. The result of the study is also in agreement with the findings of Onuoha (2016) who examined undergraduates' attitude towards plagiarism and their personal information management behavior in Babcock University, Nigeria. Results revealed that most of the respondents had a negative attitude towards plagiarism, as they rejected the statements which seemed to uphold plagiarism. Specifically, a significant number rejected the idea that students who plagiarize are not doing the society any harm. In addition, majority of the respondents rejected the idea that the system of recycling information should be encouraged. On the other hand, the findings of the studies on undergraduates' attitude towards plagiarism carried out by Ting (2013) in Malaysia and Walcott (2016) in the Caribbean were different from that of this study, as most of their respondents had an attitude that favored plagiarism.

Table 6. Perception of plagiarism by the distance learners

Statement	SA		A		D		SD		Mean	SD
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%		
Plagiarism is an academic crime	107	53.0	74	36.6	13	6.4	8	4.0	3.39	0.78
Plagiarism is an act of lack of integrity	106	52.5	62	30.7	21	10.4	13	6.4	3.29	0.90
Plagiarism is an act that shows lack of character	95	47.0	60	29.7	41	20.3	6	3.0	3.21	0.87
Plagiarism is a display of laziness	96	47.5	55	27.2	47	23.3	4	2.0	3.20	0.87
There is nothing wrong with plagiarism	19	9.4	36	17.8	78	38.6	69	34.2	2.02	0.95
If you plagiarize, then you are smart	16	7.9	48	23.8	76	37.6	62	30.7	2.09	0.93
Almost everybody engages in plagiarism, so it is not wrong	31	15.3	35	17.3	68	33.7	68	33.7	2.14	1.05
Plagiarism has nothing to do with morals	22	10.9	63	31.2	56	27.7	61	30.2	2.23	1.00

Table 7. Attitude of distance learners towards plagiarism

Statement	SA		A		D		SD		Mean	SD
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%		
I will not plagiarize because it is an academic crime	115	56.9	54	26.7	24	11.9	9	4.5	3.36	0.79
Even though I had done it before, I will not do it again	78	38.6	90	44.6	26	12.9	8	4.0	3.18	0.80
I will make sure I give acknowledgment which is due at all times	103	51.0	79	39.1	10	5.0	10	5.0	3.16	0.79
I do not see individuals who plagiarize as serious minded people	81	40.1	55	27.2	52	25.7	14	6.9	3.00	0.97
I resent the idea of plagiarism	63	31.2	81	40.1	49	24.3	9	4.5	2.98	0.86

CONCLUSION

Plagiarism is an issue that is on the front burner in the world of academics due to its prevalent rate among students and researchers. This has led to the resurgence in the intensity of plagiarism awareness creation by relevant stakeholders. The high level of awareness of plagiarism by the distance learning students indicates that success is being recorded in this regard. This is also revealed in the positive perception and attitude displayed towards plagiarism avoidance by the distance learners. The more the present level of awareness is sustained, the more the perception of and the attitude towards plagiarism becomes more favorable. This could lead to better appreciation for novel work by the students and an improvement in the quality of research at that level. Plagiarism like any other deviant behavior in the society might be difficult to eradicate, but with increased awareness creation and favorable perception and attitude, it can be deduced to the barest minimum.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1.   In order to sustain the level of awareness of the various acts that constitute plagiarism by the distance learners, there is a need for the management of the distance learning centre to liaise with the management of the university to develop a plagiarism policy that will be given to all the students. The plagiarism policy will succinctly identify what plagiarism is and also detail the consequences that will result if a student plagiarizes. This policy will help to

institutionalize the process of awareness creation and also could induce the distance learners to have a favorable perception and attitude towards plagiarism.

2. The negative perception of plagiarism displayed by the distance learners can be strengthened if the librarians in the university library use different electronic platforms that are accessible to the students in providing instructions on how to write without plagiarizing. This could enhance the capacity of the distance learners in academic writing and also assist them to have a negative mental image of plagiarism.

3. The negative attitude towards plagiarism by the distance learners can be sustained if the academic advisors and course facilitators emphasize the need to eschew plagiarism and embrace hard work to the students whenever they have the opportunity.

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APPENDIX

Test of norm for level of awareness of plagiarism acts
     The scale that was used to measure the level of awareness of plagiarism has nine items and four measures (Highly aware, moderately aware, slightly aware and not aware). The maximum score obtainable is (4 x 9)= 36. Test of norm is divided into three that is high, moderate and low. Thus, 36 /3=12

Interval table for level of plagiarism awareness of the respondents

Interval	Overall mean score image	Remark
0 - 11	-	Low
12–24	-	Moderate
25–36	26.53	High