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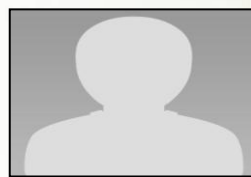
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“Electronic Plagiarism in Institutions of Higher Learning”



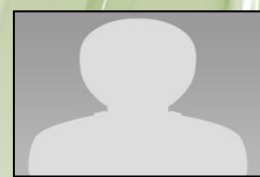
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Abstract

Plagiarism is a concept that seems to be becoming more prevalent in today's institutions of higher learning. It entails stealing and passing off ideas or words as one's own. It takes on various forms. Whereas academic integrity is the core of any institution rampant plagiarism can be attributed to the technological advancements available today. The higher learning institutions have become victims of this vice and learners give various reasons whether intentionally or unintentionally ranging from poorly developed research and writing skills, failure to understand the difference between plagiarism and paraphrasing, confusion about how to acknowledge use of material from various sources; misconceptions about plagiarism, intellectual property, and ownership of materials found on the internet.

Key Words

Academic dishonesty/ Cheating, Electronic, IT, Plagiarism.

Introduction

According to Wilson Mizner (1876 – 1933), "When you steal from one author, it's plagiarism; if you steal from many, it's research". According to Webster's dictionary, plagiarize is defined as to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own. Plagiarism is a concept that seems to be becoming more prevalent in today's institutions of higher learning. Cheating academically involves borrowing another student's work off course with the permission of the owner and altering a few areas to suit your current situation.

Forms of Plagiarism

There are three forms of plagiarism: copying word-for-word from a book, journal article, or paged from internet without placing the copied material in quotation marks and acknowledging the source in footnote or list of references. Submitting a term paper written by someone else, including a paper purchased from commercial company, would be categorized as this form of plagiarism. Lecturers in institutions of higher learning expect student's to quote very little when completing written assignments.

The second form of plagiarism is to paraphrase another's organization and language without acknowledging the source [Merriam-Webster, 2010]. Extensive use of a source even when a writer changes a few words, omits a few sentences, requires citing the source. IT has worsened the practice

The third form of plagiarism is basing materials solely on the ideas of another. In this case the work is considered plagiarized because the writer has contributed no original thought. Writing an article without acknowledging that it follows the content, outline, and ideas from others written or orally presented work is considered plagiarized because the writer has contributed no original thought. Writing an article without acknowledging that it follows the content, outline, and ideas from others written or orally presented work is considered plagiarism.

Code of Ethics

Principle 1 of the code of ethics for IT experts states that 'The IT practitioner conducts him or herself with honesty, integrity and fairness.' Plagiarism is unethical because by engaging in it, a student or a professional presents something as his or her own when in fact it is not. Such behaviour, ideas and the flow of words is intellectual property from another person.

It's not fair for students or others to receive credit for plagiarized material because the originality and creativity or copied work belongs to someone else, not the perpetrator.

Further, it is unfair when a good grade is a great deal of diligence and mental effort to an assignment and to those who submit copied work that represents little or no personal investment. The volume of information on the internet makes plagiarism easy. All that is needed to commit electronic plagiarism is to highlight, click, copy and paste.

Plagiarism in Institutions of Higher learning

Plagiarism is a concept that seems to be becoming more prevalent in today's institutions of higher learning. This is because today most research has already been done, completed, and published. This exposes the ready work to students who because of the increased demands, limited time frame, and free access to the materials on the internet find plagiarism the only resort to accomplish their work on time as well as get good grades [Holmberg, M. and McCullough, M. 2005]

Plagiarism is the theft of information and ideas and while not punishable by imprisonment, it's a serious offense because it allows the students to get credit for work not their own. [Macdonald, Ranald 2002]

However it is important to note that according to [Holmberg, M. and McCullough, M. 2006] anyone who commits plagiarism (to any extent) is robbing himself or herself the ability to develop originality and use history as a guide, not only for knowledge advancement but as a map from which a good academic piece can be derived. Research gives evidence that however wrong plagiarism is, the problem that faces the institutions of higher learning today, particularly with the prevalence of the internet is that society does not appreciate each student's perception of what is and what is not plagiarism.

According to [Holmberg, M. and McCullough, M. 2006] four elements encompass plagiarism; use of another's text, ideas, and/or illustrations; failure to credit the original author; implication that the material is that of plagiarist and failure to get the original author's consent. The report further says plagiarism occurs even if the work was caught and never published. Self-plagiarism is a form of duplicate publication. In the high-tech world of computer images, it is becoming more common to publish the same figure more than once. For example, if it is a microscopic section, rotating it, cropping it, or enhancing parts of it can make it appear to be a new illustration.

A publish-or-perish mentality must never degenerate into a plagiarized and publish mentality. Plagiarism is rampant among college undergraduates and the internet is to blame, [Merriam-Webster, 2010] such a statement has been made so often in recent times that it almost seems to be a universal truth. The other reasons are:-

1. Students are often very confused about paraphrasing putting it into your own words' and contributing sources.
2. Students are often unable or unwilling to attend to detail of proper formatting attributions. They are focused on end product hence haste and speed influence their decision to plagiarize.

3. Students are very confused about what they see as mixed messages about group work and collaborative projects. They are confused with instructions to work together but produce their own, unique individual work. They are willing to share answers and information with their peers.
4. Students do not consider their original work as something worthwhile and worthy of being protected. The goal is to get through it and get it done so they can go on to the more interesting work.
5. Students do not critically analyze information, particularly web-based sources. All information is equal, truthful; and same value free and available. They do not see plagiarism as stealing. Digital plagiarism is a digital problem and demands a digital solution.

Academic dishonesty/ Intentional plagiarism

Cheating is defined as breaking the rules to get ahead academically professionally, or financially (Callahan 2004). Cheating academically involves borrowing another student's work off course with the permission of the owner and altering a few areas to suit your current situation. This is intentional plagiarism because the borrower knows very well that they are handing in work that is not theirs.

In academic cheating, the student could buy an academic paper on the internet, from paper mill sites like essaytown.com and simply re-write it so that it's passed on as theirs. Although this may not be noticed at the time of handing in the work but when found out the culprit should expect no sympathy [Holmberg, M. and McCullough, M. 2005]. Finally cheating academically can be done by students who source the internet but when they find the relevant information to their liking or matching their research work they simply copy and paste the information word by word.

Intentional plagiarism in institutions of higher learning occurs for various reasons;

1. Learners will more often quote lack of time to research as the main reason due to their busy schedule.
2. Some would even give a reason like somebody else's work is much better since they are not sure of what they should do as most are new to research.
3. In other cases some students are as trivial so as to site peer pressure as a factor for plagiarism that is my friends got information from the internet why not me?
4. There are cases that students simply plagiarize because its ok within their cultural setup to share which involves taking work that is not your own and passing it on as yours.

Study

A study of universities revealed that 38% of the undergraduate students surveyed admitted to plagiarism in the past year. This survey was undertaken using a questionnaire where the students responded to items in check box format as well as structured questions where the students gave their own opinion. This questionnaire was mailed to IT departments in five public universities in Kenya where the students were to fill in their responses after which it was mailed back. Furthermore an interview schedule was prepared and a cross section of the

learners approached for their opinion. 60% of these students considered anything on the internet public knowledge that needed not be cited. While another 50%, who responded to the questionnaire survey, said they considered cutting and pasting from the internet not cheating at all.

Conclusion

Plagiarism is a widespread phenomenon in universities in Kenya. Whereas academic integrity is the core of any institution rampant plagiarism can be attributed to the technological advancements available today. Whereas it may now seem that it's impossible to write a paper without plagiarizing accidentally. Any phrases created by a student might already exist without the student knowing. Also, other students or pieces of journal articles might have used the same structures independently. However stealing from another author does not just simply happen, it is an intentional act. In all these cases, the difference between original work and plagiarism is very obvious. Plagiarism in institutions of higher learning needs to be curbed so as to encourage the students to develop new ideas as well as protect the author of the original work. Therefore all faculties in these institutions need to be vigilant and vet any work by their students to ensure that this vice does not suffice again.

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