

Awareness and Perception of Academicians on the Use of Turnitin Software in Detecting Plagiarism in Bayero University Kano

Kabiru Danladi Garba CLN

Bayero University Kano, Nigeria

kdgarba.lib@buk.edu.ng

ABSTRACT

The effect of plagiarism has brought a lot of academic dishonesty among the academicians. The effect is directly related to the millions of electronic resources on the internet. Plagiarism affects not only the academic staff but the integrity of the University. Turnitin is a web-based software that is used for plagiarism detection and is meant to aid and promote originality of research publications. Despite the importance attached to this software, many academicians in Bayero University Kano have partial knowledge about the software and the extent of its use to detect plagiarism. The researcher investigated the level of awareness and perception of Turnitin in detecting plagiarism misdemeanors in Bayero University Kano. The study was quantitative and used the survey research method for data collection using a questionnaire. A sample of 150 respondents of academic staff was used. The findings revealed that the level of awareness on the existence of the software among the academicians of Bayero University Kano is average. But the extent of how the software is used in detecting plagiarism is significantly low. To overcome these problems, the study recommends awareness campaigns and training on how to use Turnitin software by the University management.

Keywords: Awareness, Perception, Academicians, Turnitin, Plagiarism.

INTRODUCTION

One of the direct disadvantages and negative influence of the Internet is the promotion of obvious and rampant plagiarism, which populated and discredited some of the research publications that are found in this part of the world. Certainly, the internet increased the level of academic dishonesty among academic community. Hansen (2008:326) reported that "Today, anybody surfing the Web can access millions of documents on every subject imaginable without leaving their desks. With the click of a mouse, they can electronically cut and paste text, a few sentences or entire documents into their 'own' work." He went further to say that "Experts generally agree that the Internet and other modern technologies have made plagiarism easier."

Onuoha and Ikonne (2013) concur with Hansen (2008:155) when they stressed that "the incidents of plagiarism nowadays seem to be on the increase especially with the advent of Internet which made information more easily available and accessible without any geographical barriers." On one hand, Gow, (2013), McCab, (2005) and Kress, (1999) swayed towards ICT as the force that promotes plagiarism, by noting that "higher education all over the world especially in this 21st century is experiencing heightened reported cases of plagiarism. The prevalence is traceable to the introduction of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in education as well as the plethora of online resources.

Plagiarism is the use of material that is not cited or referenced to its source. Using someone's hard work and dedication, and passing the work as your own is what constitutes plagiarism. It is a heinous act which is certainly synonymous with cheating or corruption, Lanier (2006) stated that plagiarism is a form of cheating. Gow, (2013) similarly described it as corruption of the process of independent and critical thinking that is essential to adding to the body of knowledge. Orim, Borg and Awala-Ale (2013) quoted Park (2003) when they also termed plagiarism as academic malpractice and a breach of academic integrity.

Plagiarism is an immoral act and a serious offense and has many consequences which has disturbed and damaged reputations of many authors since ancient times. Plagiarism is a crime because it is considered a theft-a theft of ideas or a theft of text. Unethical use of other's work makes plagiarism a serious crime and hence is seriously condemned in every industry. Plagiarism wrecks serious havoc in the academic setting by making an individual to become lazy and not forthcoming. It also completely destroys personal credibility. Similarly, the entire output and originality of research contents in a particular institution can be compromised and seen as phony or fake.

All the above misdemeanours can be curtailed if and when an effective and efficient measure is taken. This brings about Turnitin, a web-based software that detects plagiarism in all aspects. Turnitin is an electronic text matching service which compares text submitted in student's work with text from a variety of sources including: the internet (over 24 billion current and archived web pages), published books and journals, textbooks, newspapers, and digital thesis databases. It also checks submitted work against other students' work submitted

in other universities that are online. In recent years, Turnitin has gained popularity as more and more institutions use it to combat plagiarism. Since its inception in 1997, the software has been tried and tested by various institutions around the world like University of Edinburg, University of Malaya, Baylor University etc. There is 87% success stories been reported on the effects of Turnitin on the incidence of students' plagiarism and the promotion of honest academic writing (iParadigms, 2013).

Taking into consideration the role of ICT and Internet in promoting high level of plagiarism in academic settings, the International School of Management (2015) pointed out that in Nigeria, the issue of academic integrity or dishonesty is so crucial in the heart of the higher institutions management. Therefore, the Committee of Vice Chancellors of Nigerian Universities in 2012 contacted the United Kingdom (UK) based academic integrity software company called Turnitin for discussions and technical collaboration. Today virtually all universities in Nigeria have access to the Turnitin system and they can now conduct originality checks of diverse publications to ensure genuine intellectual contributions to scholarship.

The nucleus of Bayero University came into being in January 1960 when Ahmadu Bello College was established and located at the school for Arabic Studies. The then Principal of the School for Arabic Studies, late Dr. Aliyu Abubakar was also in charge of the College Section, comprising Islamic History, Hausa and English Literature. In January 1964, the college moved to a temporary site at the old Kano Airport Hotel with its first set of ten students admitted for a B.A degree programme.

In 1975, Abdullahi Bayero College was raised to the status of a University College with the right to award degree on behalf of Ahmadu Bello University. The institution adopted the new name of Bayero University College and its first Principal was Dr Mahmud Tukur, who formally took over in September 1975. The University College also got a separate Governing Council headed by Professor S. O. Biobaku. Similarly, in 1977, the Federal Government of Nigeria made all the University Colleges in the country full-fledged Universities. Thus Bayero University College dropped "Abdullahi" and "College" and became simply Bayero University.

However, Bayero University Kano started using turnitin software in the year 2016 when a Journal Publishing Policy was raised in order to achieve standard publishing quality in the University and to build institutional recognition in line with international best practice. In its Journal Publishing Policy, under ethical guidelines of section four, it was clearly stated that "to facilitate the screening of articles, all journals editors must possess and use plagiarism software such as turnitin" (Bayero University Kano, 2016:5).

Despite the effort made by the Committee of the Vice Chancellors of Nigerian Universities, some academicians are not aware of the existent of Turnitin Software and what actually constitute its blessing. It is against this background that this study sought to investigate the nexus between awareness and perception of academicians on the use of turnitin software in detecting plagiarism in Bayero University Kano.

Objectives of the paper

1. To measure the level of awareness of academic staff of Bayero University Kano on the existence of Turnitin software in detecting plagiarism.
2. To measure the level of perception of academic staff of Bayero University Kano on the extent of use of Turnitin software in detecting plagiarism.

LITERATURE

Awareness and Perception

Many scholars define awareness from different angles which includes that "awareness refers to the cognitive ability of a person to discern, decipher and judge a given phenomenon. It 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. (Reinhardt, et al. 2015). Merikle (1984:342) in his own classical thinking defined awareness as "the ability of a person to discriminate among several possible stimuli; it enables the person to make right judgment and decision as well as attain high level of performance".

While perception on the other hand is the set of processes by which an individual becomes aware of and interprets information about the environment. William (2006) defines perception as a recognition and interpretation of sensory information. It is a process where we take in sensory information from our environment and use that information in order to interact with our environment. Perception allows us to take the sensory information in and make it into something meaningful. From the contribution of William, it is deduced that Perception is the way that we see things or the way we understand things to be. Similarly, a scholar by the name McBride (2007) relates that perceptions can drive actions though they can be far from reality. As such, it is very important to understand the academicians' perception towards the use of turnitin software in detecting plagiarism because even though there are great benefits, the reality may not be the same as their perception.

However, the introduction of information and communication technology (ICT) in an organization does not mean it will be used as intended. Users may reject it, misuse it, sabotage it or work around it (Holden & Karsh 2010). But yet, one of the significant factors in the planned introduction of IT is the attitude of the individual that will be required to use it (Bagozzi 2007). This was supported by Holden & Karsh (2010) and Ward et al. (2008) when they added that Individual acceptance of ICT is a crucial factor in determining the success or failure of an ICT system (Turnitin software inclusive).

From the review above, it can be deduced that awareness and perception are two coins that affect the judgment and action of any individual. As such the awareness and perception level of academicians in Bayero University Kano in relation to the use of Turnitin software is paramount and vital to be measured and this would go in a long way in having effects on their involvement in plagiarism.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism simply means presenting the work or property of another person as one's own, without appropriate acknowledgement of their work. Flint, Clegg and McDonald, (2006) cited Liverpool Hope University College, (2003) and defined plagiarism as the use of material which is not cited and referenced to its source and also the direct use of material, referenced or un-referenced, without a clear indication that the material is taken verbatim from its source. In the same way, Pyer (2000) described plagiarism as theft, he stressed that it is taking the words, ideas and labour of other people and giving the impression and or pretending that they are your own, thereby crediting the idea, opinion, and thought to oneself.

However, many scholars like Devlin and Gray (2007); Elander, et al (2010); James, McInnis and Davlin, (2002) cited in Powell (2012); Hayes and Introna (2005.) identified different ways that plagiarism can happen and these could be through:

1. Closely paraphrasing sentences, paragraphs or ideas, e.g. copying sentences and substituting words with similar meaning.
2. Submitting your own previously submitted or assessed work without permission or acknowledgement.
3. Submitting your own previously submitted or published work for publication elsewhere without permission or acknowledgement.
4. Submitting written or creative work which has been produced by someone else and claiming authorship for it, including: reproducing all or parts of another person's work.
5. Allowing or contracting another person to do the work for you.
6. Allowing or contracting another person to edit and substantially change your work.

Plagiarism occurs as result of certain elements in the academic environment. The causes of plagiarism can be summarized as: ignorance, lack of skills, and academic pressure to publish or perish. To buttress this point, Orim, Borg and Awala-Ale (2013) stressed that most plagiarism cases occurred as a result of lack of awareness and proper skills. One study on Nigerian students in post-graduate programmes in the United Kingdom (UK), found that most of the post-graduate students were not aware of what actually constitutes plagiarism before coming to UK universities. Some plagiarism behaviour such as collusion is clearly intentional, and unethical, whereas, some other could be accidental or unintentional which could be referred to as poor practice (Brown & Howell, 2001).

Similarly, Ryan et al. (2009) carried out a study on undergraduate and postgraduate Pharmacy students' perceptions of plagiarism and academic honesty and discovered that there is widespread deficiency in students' understanding of plagiarism at the University of Sydney, Australia. In a nutshell, the act of plagiarism especially in the academia is such a disturbing phenomena and vividly unlawful, it is morally wrong and needs to be condemned by all and sundry.

Turnitin

In a simple term, Turnitin is an originality checking and plagiarism prevention service used by millions of individuals and thousands of institutions worldwide. Turnitin encourages proper usage of citing other people's written material. The software offers a web-based service to manage the process of submitting and tracking papers electronically, providing better—and faster—feedback to students.

Liddell (2003) noted that Turnitin is a tool which allows the tutors to check for suspected plagiarism, as well as evolving into a more all-round electronic submission and grading tool. From another view, Badge and Scott (2009) identified Turnitin as a service when they reported that Turnitin is service that checked for individual collusion and copying from the internet within the same service; that instructors save time using electronic detection services and use reports generated to educate students about writing from sources and citation rules; and, that, for effective deterrence, use of electronic services for detecting plagiarism is coupled with educating students about plagiarism penalties and consequences. Similarly, on the effect and strength of Turnitin in

detecting plagiarisms, Jocoy and DiBiase (2006) emphasized that Turnitin detected five times more instances of plagiarism than manual methods.

iParadigms (2013) the creators of Turnitin plagiarism detection software explained that the software analyzes and detects plagiarism by producing an Originality Report in which text in a piece of work matches text in the database that was highlighted and linked to the original source. The highlighted text indicates passages that have been copied or that have been poorly paraphrased. The report also includes a Similarity Index which is calculated as the number of highlighted words divided by the total number of words in your work. They continued that the software used color as codes in measuring the level of plagiarism found in a particular piece of work. This they expressed as “blue (no matching text), green (one word to 24% match), yellow (25% to 49%), orange (50% to 74%), and red (75% to 100%)” of material used and is not cited or referenced to its source.

Limitations of Turnitin

Even though there are positive advantages on the use of Turnitin software in detecting plagiarism, the software also has its limitations. These include the tendency of the software not to detect exactly material plagiarised, but with the aid of an instructor, detection of plagiarism can be achieved. Jones (2008) noted that “Turnitin is not a plagiarism detection service but a text-matching system that still requires that the instructor determine whether the writing is, in fact, plagiarised.” Turnitin is also limited in that, it is not capable of checking everything on the net, for example, images and some computer programs. Mulcahy and Goodacre (2004) also highlighted that the Turnitin database does not contain all the material that is on the web and the software cannot identify paraphrased text.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the survey method, which is suitable for this kind of study, as it aims to obtain the general perspective of awareness and perception of academicians on the use of Turnitin software in detecting plagiarism in Bayero University. The total population of the study are 1564 staff of which 253 are academic staff as such 150 were sample. Simple random sampling was used and questionnaire developed by the researcher was the instrument of data collection of which 137 (91.3%) respondents completed it. The questionnaire was in two parts, the first deals with personal information while the second part specifically asked about the awareness, perception and use of the Turnitin software. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Analysis

Table 1 Response Rate of the Respondents

Response rate	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Administered questionnaire	150	100
Returned questionnaire	137	91.3
Not returned	13	8.7

Table 1 shows the response rate of the respondents whereby a total number of one hundred and fifty questionnaire were distributed to the sampled academic staff of Bayero University Kano and 137 (91.3%) were returned duly completed and usable while only 13 (8.7%) were missing but this has not in any way affected the conduct of the present study.

Table 2 Level of awareness of the existence of Turnitin software

Level of Awareness	Frequency	Percentage%
High level of awareness	50	36.5
Average level of awareness	64	46.7
Low level of awareness	23	16.8

In answering the first research question which sought to determine the level of awareness with regards to the existence of the Turnitin software in detecting plagiarism among the academic staff of Bayero University Kano, the level of awareness was observed and the findings revealed as presented in table 3 above that almost half of the respondents 64 (46.7%) reported average level of awareness. However, 50 (36.5%) reported high level of awareness and only 23 (16.8%) reported low level of awareness. This shows a moderate level of awareness of the existence of the Turnitin software in detecting plagiarism generally.

Table 3 Causes of plagiarism

Causes of plagiarism	Frequency	Percentage%
Pressure to meet deadline	64	46.7
Inadequate academic writing skills	20	14.6
Lack of knowledge on what constitute plagiarism	53	38.7

The causes of plagiarism among academicians of Bayero University Kano were identified and the analysis revealed that 64 (46.7%) of respondents blamed the prevalence of plagiarism on pressure in meeting deadlines

in academic endeavours such as publish or perish syndrome, while 53 (38.7%) blamed it on lack of knowledge among the academic staff on what constitute plagiarism and only 20 (14.6%) cited inadequate academic writing skills among the academicians.

Table 4 Perception on the use of turnitin software in detecting plagiarism

Perception on the use of Turnitin software in detecting plagiarism	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Undecided	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed
The software detect plagiarism	19(13.9%)	24(17.5%)	49(35.8%)	22(16.0%)	23(16.8%)
The software encourages academicians to put more effort into their academic writing	18(13.1%)	47(34.3%)	42(30.7%)	17(12.4%)	13(9.5%)
Turnitin is just an application software	72(52.5%)	20(14.6%)	19(13.9%)	16(11.7%)	10(7.3%)
The software provide evidence of plagiarism	42(30.6%)	30(21.9%)	50(36.5%)	9(6.6%)	6(4.4%)
I have no idea how the software works	91(66.4%)	19 (13.9)	11(8.0%)	9(6.6%)	7(5.1%)

The above table 4 which answered research question number two uncovered that significant number of the respondent 91 (66.4%) have no idea how the software is used and more than half, 72 (52.5%) believed that the turnitin is just an application software and nothing more, while only 19 (13.9%) strongly agreed that the turnitin software detect plagiarism. Despite the low knowledge on how the software works, almost one third of the respondents 47(34.3%) agreed that turnitin software encourages the academic staff to put more effort into their academic writing but yet on the issue of the software to provide evidence of plagiarism, more than one quarter of the respondents 50(36.5%) are undecided. However, the findings imply that the perception on how the software is used in detecting plagiarism is slightly low

Table 5 Factors that can reduce level of involvement in plagiarism

Factors that can reduce level of involvement in plagiarism	Frequency	Percentage%
Awareness	20	14.6
Training and education on the effect of plagiarism	14	10.2
Definite university policy on plagiarism	11	8.0
Subscribe to turnitin plagiarism detection software for the University community	92	67.2

Table 5 above shows that the respondents suggested ways of reducing or curbing act of plagiarism among the academic staff of Bayero University Kano, a significant number 92 (67.2%) believed that subscribing to Turnitin plagiarism detection software for the university community will curb the act of plagiarism, 20 (14.6%) suggested continuous and increasing awareness among the academic staff will reduce the level of plagiarism and 14 (10.2%) cited adequate training and education on proper citation and referencing while only 11 (8.0%) suggested that the university should have definite university policy on plagiarism.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

As observed by the researcher and also with different literatures that has been reviewed, it was noted that there is an increase in the wave of plagiarism in the country, Bayero University Kano inclusive. This is evidently crippling the existing literature, research and scholarship, as such, the study sought to investigate the awareness and perception of the academic staff on the use of Turnitin software in detecting plagiarism in Bayero University Kano. The resultant findings are discussed hereunder:

The level of awareness of plagiarism reported by respondents in this study obviously indicated a glaring moderate and average level of awareness of the software among the academicians of Bayero University Kano. This is in line with the work of Powell (2012) when he reported on the perception of the postgraduate students on using detecting software in Malaysia.

It is noteworthy that the study showed the main causes of plagiarism like the pressure in meeting deadlines in academic endeavours such as publish or perish syndrome. This could be attributable to guideline enforced by the National Universities Commission that an academic publication is one of the conditions for promotion of academic staff. Similarly on the perception of the use of Turnitin software in detecting plagiarism, the study shows an obvious deficiency in having a negative perception on how the Turnitin software is used. This is a serious concern; taking into consideration the availability of ICT gadgets and the amount of information is doubling every single day, as such the academic staff ought to have had requisite exposure and expertise in this regard.

Lastly, the respondents identified the factor that could reduce the level of involvement in plagiarism in Bayero University Kano when they noted that subscribing to Turnitin plagiarism detection software for the University community is the possible solution. This finding resonates with the effort made by the Committee of Vice Chancellors of Nigerian Universities in 2012 when they contacted the United Kingdom (UK) based academic integrity software company called Turnitin for discussions and technical collaboration for all the Nigerian Universities.

CONCLUSION

This paper presented the level of awareness and perceptions of academicians on the use of Turnitin software to detect plagiarism in Bayero University Kano. Although the scope is limited to academic staff only yet the study captures and gave insight into the level of awareness on the existence and how the detection software is used to address plagiarism. The result revealed that the level of awareness of the software among the academicians of Bayero University Kano is average. But the extent of how the software is used in detecting plagiarism is slightly low.

It is evident from this study that in order to effectively fight plagiarism, it is important to go back to the drawing board and re-address the value of awareness, training and education on the effect of plagiarism, definite university policy on plagiarism and also work to change the attitudes towards “Publish or Perish” syndrome.

The results of this paper were used to assist the Bayero University Kano in making a decision as to whether using Turnitin to the fullest is worthwhile in fighting plagiarism. It was decided to continue using Turnitin to spot plagiarism.

In conclusion, plagiarism detection software should be one of the avenues and comprehensive way forward to promoting academic honesty among academic populace.

RECOMMENDATION

The following recommendations were made based on the findings

1. Awareness programmes and trainings on how to use Turnitin plagiarism detection software should be intensified by the University management so as to actively reduce the rate of the plagiarism.
2. National Universities Commission (NUC) should enforce the use of Turnitin plagiarism detection software by all Universities in Nigeria so as to minimize the rate of plagiarism by the academic community. Any university that fails to comply should be sanctioned by the National Universities Commission.
3. Academic libraries should play the role of custodian of information. They shall inform and sanitize every academic staff on the penalty and danger of plagiarism.

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