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Contents

University Students' Knowledge and Attitudes about Plagiarism: A Web-Based Cross-Sectional Study

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Abstract

Plagiarism is the act of using someone else's ideas, words, or work without giving them proper credit and presenting it as your own. It is considered a serious ethical and academic offense in most educational institutions and professional settings. The main objective of this research was to find the level of knowledge and attitudes about plagiarism among university level students and various associated factors affecting for level of knowledge and attitudes

An analytical cross-sectional study was conducted among 288 universities level students using non probability sampling. Collected information was checked for completeness and coded with serial number and then analyzed using SPSS-22. Descriptive and inferential statistical tools were used for data analysis. In the descriptive statistics frequency and percentage were calculated for the categorical variable while mean and SD were calculated for continuous variables. In the inferential statistics to find the association between level of knowledge and attitude Chi-Square test were used. p-value <0.05 was considered as statistically significant. The mean±SD of age was 24.4±3.15 years. This study revealed that 68.4% students know the meaning of plagiarism. Also, 46.2 % students had good (with 95% CI 40.44%-51.95%). Likewise, 51% students had positive attitude level of attitude (with 95% CI 45.22 %-56.77%). Academic year, level of education, type of university was found to be statistically significant with outcome variable (knowledge and attitude) (p-value<0.05).

More than half of university students were still unaware of the concept condition as well as of type, its significance, consequences and remedies for plagiarism. So, the academic community of concerned authorities needs to pay close attention, not just as a breach of ethics and regulations, in order to create a harmonious academic environment

Keywords: *Attitude, knowledge, plagiarism, university, web-based cross-sectional study.*

1. Introduction

The term "plagiarius" does indeed have a Latin origin and was used in the 1st century to describe someone who stole another person's work (Pecorari, 2008). The Roman poet Martial is often credited with pioneering its usage. Martial once complained that another poet had "kidnapped his verses," using the term "plagiarius" to express the act of literary theft (Bansal & Kumar, 2022). The word "plagiarius" derives from the Latin word "plagium," which means "kidnapping" or "abduction." Over time, the term "plagiarism" has come to encompass the act of taking someone else's work or

ideas without proper attribution or permission (Ravindran, Zacharia, & Roy, 2018). Plagiarism is the act of using or presenting someone else's ideas, words, or work as your own, without giving proper credit or attribution (Lands, 1999). So, it is a form of intellectual theft and a violation of academic and ethical standards(Amiri & Razmjoo, 2016). There are different forms of plagiarism. It may be copy and paste the information without quotation marks or citation, paraphrasing someone else's ideas without proper attribution, presenting someone else's work as your own, and sing images, graphs, or charts without permission or citation (Ismail, 2018). Plagiarism is a serious problem in academic, professional, as well as in creative fields (Roka, 2017). Research on university students' knowledge and attitudes about plagiarism has been conducted to understand their awareness of plagiarism, their understanding of its consequences, and their attitudes toward academic integrity. Such research helps educator. It will provide a general overview of the topic, it's important to note that specific studies may vary in their methodologies, sample sizes, and contexts.rs and institutions develop strategies to prevent plagiarism and promote ethical academic behavior (Hosny & Fatima, 2014). Many studies have found that university students generally have a basic understanding of what plagiarism is. They recognize that copying other scholar work without proper citation is also a plagiarism. However, some students may not be aware of other forms of plagiarism, such as paraphrasing without attribution or self-plagiarism. Earlier research suggests that while students may be aware of plagiarism, they often lack a comprehensive understanding of its consequences. Some students may not fully grasp the academic, professional, and legal implications associated with plagiarism (Ramzan, Munir, Siddique, & Asif, 2012). Various revealed a range of attitudes among university students toward plagiarism. Some students have a strong commitment to academic integrity and view plagiarism as unethical (Yang, 2012). Students are the future researcher they most understand the importance of originality and the value of citing sources properly. On the other hand, some students may have a more relaxed attitude, considering plagiarism to be a minor offense or a common practice among their peers (Hosny & Fatima, 2014). Various factors can influence students' engagement in plagiarism. Research has identified factors such as time pressure, a competitive academic environment, lack of confidence in one's abilities, inadequate knowledge of citation and referencing, and poor understanding of academic integrity policies (Chiang, Zhu, & Yu, 2022). Additionally, the prevalence of internet sources and online content has made it easier to access and misuse information. Researchers have explored the effectiveness of educational interventions to promote academic integrity and prevent plagiarism. These interventions include plagiarism workshops, tutorial programs, academic integrity policies, and technological tools for plagiarism detection (Karim, Zamzuri, & Nor, 2009). Studies suggest that combining multiple interventions, ongoing education, and a supportive institutional culture can positively impact students' knowledge and attitudes toward plagiarism. It's important

to consider cultural and contextual factors that may influence students' perceptions of plagiarism (Tremayne & Curtis, 2021). Attitudes and practices related to academic integrity can vary across different educational systems, disciplines, and cultural backgrounds. Understanding these variations is crucial for implementing effective strategies that align with students' cultural expectations and educational norms (Kuntz & Butler, 2014). Overall, research on university students' knowledge and attitudes about plagiarism highlights the need for continued efforts in raising awareness, providing comprehensive education, and fostering a culture of academic integrity (Singh & Guram, 2014). By addressing these factors, universities can empower students to develop responsible research and writing practices while upholding the principles of intellectual honesty (Tran, Hogg, & Marshall, 2022). Therefore, it is always cite and attribute your sources correctly and avoid any form of plagiarism. The objective of this research was to find the level of knowledge and attitudes about plagiarism among university level students and various associated factors affecting for level of knowledge and attitudes.

2. Methodology

An analytical web based cross sectional study was conducted among different universities level students from January-February, 2023 in Bharatpur, Chitwan. A research conducted by Park showed that 40% (Park & Jang, 2013) students had good knowledge on plagiarism by using this as prevalence with 95% confidence interval and 6% margin of error the minimum sample size for this research was $n = z2pq/e^2 = 257$. But this research was conducted in 288 students. Students was selected by using non probability (purposive) sampling technique. Data was collected by using self-administered questionnaire via Google form after checking reliability and validity of the questionnaire. Collected information was checked for completeness and then coded with serial number and then analyzed using SPSS-22. In this research age, gender, place of residence, type of university, Faculties, Academic year were independent variables while level of knowledge and level of attitude was taken as a dependent variables. Descriptive and inferential statistical tools used for data analysis. In the descriptive statistics frequency and percentage were calculated for the categorical variable while mean and SD were calculated for continuous variables. To find the level of knowledge and attitude, first of all total score was calculated and then mean score. Level of knowledge and attitude was categorize on the basis of mean score was calculated. If the total score of knowledge is less than mean value, it was considered as poor level of knowledge and score more than mean value was considered as good knowledge. Similarly, in attitude if the total score of attitude is less than mean value, it was considered as negative attitude and score more than mean value was considered as positive attitude (DeVoss & Rosati, 2002). In the inferential statistics to find the association between level of knowledge and attitude Chi-Square test were used. p-value <0.05 was considered as statistically significant.

3. Result

Data was collected from 257 students from different universities of Nepal via Google form across different faculties. The data regarding plagiarism was collected from 257 students from different academic institutions (Universities) of Nepal via Google form across different faculties. Majority (95.5%) of the students were in the age group 20-30 years. The Mean±SD of age was 24.4±3.15 years. More than two thirds (77.4%) of the students were female by gender and more than half (66.7%) of them were urban by place of residence. Majority (60.4%) of the students were from Purbanchal University followed by Tribhuvan University (22.6%). More than half of the students were undergraduate (63.9%) and most of them were from Nursing department and reading in final year (Table 1).

Table 1. Sociodemographic information of the students (n=257)

Sociodemographic variables	No. of students	Percentage
Age (Years)		
20-30	275	95.5
30-40	13	4.5
Mean±SD	24.4±3.15	
Gender		
Female	223	77.4
Male	64	22.5
Place of Residence		
Urban	192	66.7
Rural	96	33.3
Type of University		
Purbanchal University	174	60.4
Tribhuvan University	65	22.6
Kathmandu University	40	13.9
Pokhara University	9	3.1
Level of education		
Graduate (Master and above Degree)	104	36.1
Under Graduate (Bachelor Degree)	184	63.9
Faculties		
BN/BSc Nursing	153	53.1
BPH	31	10.8
B.Pharmacy	32	11.1
BSc (General science)	17	5.9
MBBS/BDS	12	4.2
Others (MSc/MN/MD)	55	36.8
Academic year		
First year	20	6.9
Second year	35	12.2
Third year	77	26.7
Final year	156	54.2

Regarding the level of knowledge of the students on each domain. Study revealed that 68.4% know the meaning of plagiarism, 76.4% students still no knowledge on whether we have to give citation of tables, graph and pictures. Also, nearly (60%) students mention that no need to cite that information which we heard. Likewise, 29.5% students mention that it is acceptable if we paraphrase some part of information and put quotation. Also, 50.3% mentioned that we can write without mentioned any sources, 44.1% students mention that we can copy and paste text from one's own similar work into own work. More than 80% students mention that we are allowed to copy and paste the information from internet source without citation. More than half (60%) students mentioned that it is not necessary to cite well-known proverbs (Table 2).

Table 2. Knowledge on each domain (n=257)

Questions	Percentage (%)
Concept of Plagiarism	68.4
No need to cite tables, graphs or pictures	76.4
No need to cite what we heard	59.7
Acceptable to paraphrase parts of a text, and put quotation	29.5
Is it not necessary to state the source	50.3
Copy and paste text from one's own similar work into own work	44.1
Can copy and paste from the Internet pages without citation	81.3
Use someone idea with-out state its source or author	60.1
Not necessary to cite well-known proverbs	60.4
Author is not stated on a web-page, it not state the source	53.1
Can be take image from Internet sources without citations	66.3
State the source, can we copy and paste any parts of the text	42

Among the total students this study revealed that 46.2% students had good knowledge on plagiarism with (95% CI as 40.44% to 51.95%) while 53.8% students had still poor knowledge on when and why to do citation (Table 3).

Table 3. Level of knowledge among students towards plagiarism (n=257)

Level of Knowledge	No. of students	Percentage	95% CI	
			Lower	Upper
Poor	155	53.8		
Good	133	46.2	40.44	51.95

Among the total students this study revealed that 51% students had positive attitude on plagiarism with (95% CI as 45.22% to 56.77%) while 49% students had negative attitude towards the plagiarism (Table 4).

Table 4. Level of attitude among students towards plagiarism (n=257)

Level of attitude	No. of students	Percentage	95% CI	
			Lower	Upper
Negative	141	49		
Positive	147	51	45.22	56.77

This table showed the association between levels of knowledge with selected sociodemographic variables. This finding revealed that type of university in which they are reading (p-value=0.007) and academic year (p-value=0.036) was found as statistically significant while reaming variables were found to be statistically insignificant (p-value >0.05) (Table 5).

Table 5. Association between level of knowledge with selected sociodemographic variables among students (n=257)

Variables	Level of knowledge		Chi-square	p-value
	Poor	Good		
Age				
20-30	148(53.8)	127(46.2)	1.25	0.94
30-40	7(53.8)	6(46.2)		
Gender				
Male	120(53.8)	103(46.2)	0.87	0.64
Female	34(53.1)	30(46.9)		
Place of residence				
Rural	58(60.4)	38(39.6)	2.25	0.11
Urban	97(50.5)	95(49.5)		
Type of University				
TU	32(49.2)	33(50.8)		
KU	21(52.5)	19(47.5)		
PU	95(54.6)	79(45.4)	2.77	0.007*
Pokahara	4(80)	1(20)		
Others	3(75)	1(25)		
Academic year				
First	10(50)	10(50)		
Second	24(68.6)	11(31.4)	8.52	0.036
Third	48(62.3)	29(37.7)		
Fourth	73(46.8)	83(53.2)		

*Using likelihood ratio test

This table showed the association between levels of attitude with selected sociodemographic variables. This finding revealed that only academic year (p-value=<0.001) was found as statistically significant with level of attitude while reaming variables were found to be statistically insignificant (p-value >0.05) (Table 6).

Table 6. Association between level of attitude with selected sociodemographic variables among students (n=257)

Variables	Level of Attitude		Chi-square	p-value
	Negative	Positive		
Age				
20-30	136(49.5)	139(50.5)	0.6	0.43
30-40	5(38.5)	8(61.5)		
Gender				
Male	110(49.3)	113(50.7)	1.16	0.55
Female	30(46.9)	34(53.1)		
Place of residence				

Rural	48(50)	48(50)	0.63	0.8
Urban	93(48.4)	99(51.6)		
Universities				
TU		30(46.2)		
KU	19(47.5)	21(52.5)	5.45	0.2*
PU	85(48.9)	89(51.1)		
Pokahara		5(100)		
Others	2(50)	2(50)		
Academic year				
First	12(60)	8(40)		
Second	11(31.4)	24(68.6)	7.48	<0.001
Third	34(44.2)	43(55.8)		
Fourth	84(53.8)	72(46.2)		

*Using likelihood ratio test

4. Discussion

This research revealed that the mean±SD of age was 24.4±3.15 years. The sex ratio was found to be (female to male ratio) is 3:1. Majority of the students were from Purbanchal University followed by Tribhuvan University. A study was conducted by (Ramzan et al., 2012) in Pakistan among 350 students showed that 195 were male, belonged to 21–23 years age group and 240 of the respondents was graduate students. A study was conducted by (Pecorari, 2008) among 270 participants in China among them 39.6% were male and reaming were female. This study revealed that 68.4% students know the meaning of plagiarism likewise, 68% students know the meaning of plagiarism, 29% students mention that do paraphrase and citation, <45% students mention that no need to cite own work and mention source and do copy and paste while the study conducted by (Singh & Guram, 2014) found that 85% participants know about plagiarism. Study conducted by Ramzan (2012) in Pakistan mentioned that 73.1% students know the meaning of plagiarism. A study was conducted among 138 students in two institutes in Europe and Africa. Result highlighted that 98% of respondents had heard of plagiarism, only 45% of respondents had heard about self-plagiarism and 44.5% understand that it was morally reprehensible (Lindahl & Grace, 2018). Regarding level of knowledge 46.2 % students had good (with 95% CI 40.44%-51.95%). Likewise 51% students had positive attitude level of attitude (with 95% CI 45.22 %-56.77%). The results showed that students were not very knowledgeable about plagiarism and the procedures and standards that universities have in place to deal with it (Ramzan et al., 2012). The main findings reveal that pupils had very little prior understanding about plagiarism before the topic was introduced to them (Ibegbulam & Eze, 2015). Academic year, level of education, type of university were found to be statistically significant with level of knowledge and attitude (p-value<0.05). Fear of receiving a low grade, knowledge that other students were plagiarizing, options provided by the Internet for copying, and the lack of sanctions for plagiarism-related offenses are the significantly affecting factors for plagiarism (Ibegbulam & Eze, 2015). Research indicates that most studies regarding perceptions of plagiarism and attitudes toward it often lack a thorough examination of

how these perceptions relate to other contextual, sociocultural, or institutional factors. Similarly, these studies frequently overlook how attitudes toward plagiarism correlate with students' views on various forms of plagiarism (Husain, Al-Shaibani, & Mahfoodh, 2017).

5. Conclusion

Knowledge and attitude regarding plagiarism among Nepalese university students is not satisfactory and good. For this there needs to be addressing this issue through awareness and strict punishment. It also emphasizes the importance of promoting ethical writing and suggests that the inconsistent attitudes observed among students indicate a lack of knowledge and awareness about plagiarism as an unethical act. More than half of university students are still unaware of the concept condition as well as of type, its significance, consequences and remedies for plagiarism. Plagiarism and other forms of misconduct should be acknowledged, recognized, and not tolerated in the field of academic writing. So, the academic community of concerned authorities needs to pay close attention, not just as a breach of ethics and regulations. This is also a result of insufficient knowledge and a lack of academic literacy, in order to create a harmonious academic environment.

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