

The Impact Of Internet On Plagiarism: In Context Of Western And Non-Western Countries

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Abstract : As a concept, plagiarism has an early history, and knowing its history helps to position the importance of this study. From the beginning, plagiarism has been a messy concept, and over the centuries, and in particular over these past few decades since the invention of our easy ability to obtain information over the Internet, the concept of plagiarism has become messier. Here, researchers are focusing on history of plagiarism trends in western and non western world and nowadays how internet is responsible for increase in plagiarism behaviour.

Index Terms : Plagiarism, Internet, Western Countries and Non – Western Countries

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Mallon [1], "the Elizabethan playwright Ben Johnson was the first person to use the word 'plagiarist' to mean literary theft, at the beginning of the 17th century". The Modern Language Association defines plagiarism as "using another person's ideas or expression in your writing without acknowledging the source" [2]. The entry for plagiarism in The New Encyclopaedia Britannica defines plagiarism as "the act of taking the writings of another person and passing them off as one's own." The plagiarism is currently conceived as an immoral act, and because we have better methods of uncovering and revealing the act, plagiarism has received much more attention today than it did in during first half of the twentieth century. The word plagiarism stems from *plagiarium*, a Latin term first used by the Roman poet Martial and was defined as a "person who abducts the child or slave of another, kidnapper, seducer, also a literary thief." (The Oxford English Dictionary). Plagiarism is associated with theft, with the taking of ideas that belong to someone else, with stealing away the fruit of someone else's work. Drum [3] explained that plagiarism is both legally and morally wrong because it involves the appropriation of words or ideas that belong to someone else and the misrepresentation of them as one's own. Briggs [4] categorized plagiarism into two categories: "copying" or "borrowing" and "stealing" or "cheating." He claims that the first two terms are "morally neutral," for a while, they capture the basic activities involved in plagiarizing, they fail to indicate "the inappropriateness of that act fully." The next two terms highlights "the immorality of the act which might appear to be the easier way." McLeod [5] brought attention to the lack of intention included in most definitions of plagiarism, in which any form of copying without proper citation is dubbed plagiarism. She draws a clear distinction between intentional plagiarism, which is defined by conscious deception, and unintentional plagiarism, which is characterised by an apparent effort to properly integrate and document the source, and reminds her readers that most undergraduate students, particularly freshmen, have not yet mastered such source skills. Here the researchers are trying to connect the plagiarism behaviour in past with the plagiarism behaviour in present and the impact of internet on plagiarism practices.

PLAGIARISM: ILLUSTRATIONS

Early history shows that plagiarism, as we know it today, was a common practice among writers and speakers who borrowed heavily from each other. While we find the act of plagiarism egregious today, it was not uncommon for writers to copy the text of another in the past. Plagiarism, fundamentally as we define it as copying without attribution, occurred long before copyright laws. Nowadays, newspaper headlines denote plagiarism in politics, business, entertainment, law, health, science, and academic institutions—instructors, teachers, and high-ranking administration, almost every week, and these plagiarism incidences are too often being drawn back to the plagiarist's education [6] it quickly becomes obvious just how serious this problem has become not only in our country but in other countries, as well. Plagiarism also struck even higher up the academic ladder when a university president stepped down before a plagiarism probe had barely begun [7]. A New York University professor blogged about his experience where a good number of his students had plagiarised and where he had dutifully reported the plagiarism only to find that he was punished rather than the students. As a result, he said that if his students ever plagiarised again, he would be ignoring it. The University would not comment on the situation [8]. United States President, Barrack Obama, was accused of plagiarism in his first inaugural speech, by taking phrases taken from another politician's speech, but Obama claimed the other man was his good friend [9]. Obama suffered nothing more than a few questions from the press, to which he responded the material used was from a good friend, and the two of them borrow each other's words all the time. In Romania, government officials were ousted when a book and academic documents the officials had generated had been found plagiarised [10].

So, how do these headlines relate to our students and the plagiarism problem that occurs in our classrooms? These headlines attest to the devastation of career and loss of honour when plagiarism occurs: how people are fired, how they are forced to step down, how a whole country's doctoral exam is being scrutinised. On the flip side, however, students also see how some people can plagiarize, and nothing happens except for a sensationalised headline.

THE HISTORY OF PLAGIARISM IN THE WESTERN WORLD

The Western concept of plagiarism is based on the belief that ideas and words can be owned [11]. There is some debate

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as to when the notion of the author as the owner first emerged in Western literary practices but most legal and literary historians agree that the practice was established by the eighteenth century when the mass distribution of printed material was popularized and the previous system of patronage declined [12]. In an oral society, the discourse was not a product to be owned but rather shared. However, ownership and strict copyright rules adopted in Western nations at the end of the eighteenth and early nineteenth established "that the transgressive properties always intrinsic to the act of writing became the forceful imperative of literature" [13]. In her classic work *The genius and the copyright: Conditions of the emergence of the 'Author,'* Woodmansee [14] maintained that the modern concept of the author is an eighteenth-century concept emerging from the desire of writers in England, France, and Germany to earn their living selling their writing to the expanding middle-class population of readers. The development of the theory of plagiarism in academia in the United States somewhat paralleled the development of the theory of plagiarism in Western society. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, U.S. colleges did not require students to write papers but rather taught rhetoric. Students were required to make oral presentations [15]. In the nineteenth century, the practice of requiring students to write papers became common, and as Simmons [15] states, "with the requirement to write papers came student plagiarism." While plagiarism is often viewed as a major academic offense, it is not a crime in the legal sense and for much of human history was not even viewed as unethical behaviour. Mimesis, or imitation, is a competing concept of authorship prevalent during the Middle Ages in the Western world. Literacy was produced and controlled by the Church. The purpose of literacy was "furthering God's purposes" [16] not the glorification of the author. Mimesis prevalent at points of Western history is the concept of authorship still used in many cultures today. Western academics are based on what Ede and Lunsford [17] referred to as the "peculiarly modern construct" of the notion of the single author. Howard [18] suggested that using this construct, "The writer who is not autonomous and original demonstrates an absence of morality, earns the label 'plagiarist,' and deserves punishment."

THE HISTORY OF PLAGIARISM IN NON-WESTERN SOCIETIES

China is the best-known example of a society that has continued the practice of mimesis. Mimesis is a form of writing based on imitation of what are considered to be more learned or eloquent texts. This is a literary tradition common to the Middle Age. With an early education system based on memorization and a system of high stakes exams, originality of thought is not encouraged. Emphasizing the importance of memorization, Matalene [19] wrote, "Ultimately, the Chinese memorize not just the characters of their beautiful and difficult written language; they memorize the culture itself." Confucian patterns of social and educational thought have greatly influenced both China and Japan [20], [21], [22]. "Knowledge is considered static, something to be mastered through arduous study and preferably memorized, because of the intrinsic moral benefits such as discipline imparts. Original thinking should be avoided." [22]. Alford [20] suggested that the Confucian world view looks to the past

for imitation and emulation. In such a world view plagiarism is not stealing but rather "the expression and reinforcement of community values" [21]. The Japanese language does not have a single word for plagiarism [22]. Students are taught that copying without giving sources is considered improper, but it is not viewed as a major academic offense. As is true in China, students study from an early age to pass exams largely based on multiple-choice questions. Dryden also pointed out the system of teaching and learning is based on the memorization of large quantities of material rather than learning to write in an original fashion. While there is a significant body of literature on the differing textual practices of modern Western societies and a few Eastern societies (China and Japan) little has been written of the specific textual practices of other nations. There is some literature [23] dealing with the textual practices of oral cultures such as Africa and West Ireland by those engaged in language studies and research on the problems encountered by English as a second language (ESL) students by those in composition studies. Plagiarism and the Impact of the Internet on Plagiarism The September 19, 2003 issue of *CQ Researcher* devoted to the issue of plagiarism included a cover with the statement, "Educators and journalists say the easy access to information provided by the Internet is partly to blame for student plagiarism and journalistic fraud." While a more measured statement than that of the November 22, 1999 issue of *U.S. News & World Report* ("Cheating, writing, and arithmetic: A new epidemic of fraud is sweeping through the schools." in 1999) both headlines are putting at least part of the blame for student plagiarism on the Internet [43]. While there is a significant body of anecdotal evidence, there is little empirical evidence to support this belief. The lack of empirical evidence does not necessarily dispute the statement, however. There is very little empirical evidence regarding any form of student plagiarism. What we know of plagiarism comes from surveys of students and, to some degree, faculty. These surveys [24] indicate that most students, at some point in their academic careers, cheated on an exam or plagiarised on a major assignment. These surveys can be small such as Buranen's [25] survey of her writing students or large such as McCabes and Trevino's [26] research at nine medium to large state universities and McCabe, Trevino, and Butterfield's [27] later study at 21 colleges and universities, but they never purport to be representative of students in higher education. Schools tend to be self-selected, generally do not include community colleges [28], and rarely include the less selective institutions that educate the vast majority of students [29]. No data collection mechanism exists actually to quantify the national incidence of cheating. Because these studies rely on students self-reporting, they also rely on students' interpretation of what is meant by plagiarism. Certain actions, such as buying a paper or turning in a paper wholly written by someone else would be considered clear cut plagiarism. However, it is questionable whether students would recognize other actions such as self-plagiarism or the copying of ideas without attribution as plagiarism. To address the lack of empirical evidence in the area of plagiarism and the Internet, Scanlon and Neumann [30] surveyed students to gain a better understanding of how students use the Internet to plagiarize. The researchers surveyed students at nine schools with a combined

enrollment of just under 80,000 students. The schools included one community college and two institutes of technology, two private schools, an American University in the Middle East and four state institutions. They used a convenience sample of 698 students who volunteered to take the survey. The results were based on self-reporting, but nowhere on the survey were students asked to provide any information that could individually identify them. Using a 5-point Likert-type scale, students were asked how often they engaged in each of the eight acts of plagiarism. To eliminate confusion over the use of the word plagiarism, the word itself did not appear in the questionnaire. Students were asked to rate themselves regarding specific acts such as purchasing a paper from a term paper mill or copying text without appropriate citation. The survey provided data to compare the use of Internet and print sources. For example, students were asked the likelihood of their copying text without citation using a print source and the likelihood of copying text without citation using an online source. The report did not show significant differences between self-reporting of plagiarism between print and online sources. What the report did indicate was a significant difference between self-reporting of a student's activities versus students' perception of the actions of others. For example, 2.3% of students reported they often/very frequently purchased a paper to hand in, but they believed 21.3% of others often/very frequently purchased a paper to hand in. Scanlon and Neumann's [30] research showed little significant difference between the likelihood of plagiarism using print and online sources while an earlier study by McCabe, Trevino, and Butterfield [27] found a somewhat lower percentage of students indicating they had plagiarised from Internet versus print sources. While 40% of college students indicated they had "copied a few sentences without citation" from a written source only 10%, reported having "copied a few sentences from a Web site without footnoting them." Similarly, 16% admitted they had "copied almost word for word from a print source and submitted as own" while only 5% admitted to having "Turned in a paper obtained in large part from a term-paper mill or Web site" [31]. The results of the two studies McCabe, Trevino, and Butterfield [27] and Scanlon and Neumann [30] seem counterintuitive. If a student plans on plagiarizing, it appears logical that Internet sources would provide the easiest means. College students who participated in the McCabe, Trevino, and Butterfield [27] study provided some insight into this seeming anomaly in focus group interviews. Students believed Internet sources were not of sufficient quality to use in assignments, and they felt that instructors were likely to be familiar with the sources. The same attitudes did not come across in interviews with high school students. In a 2000 study of high school students, McCabe [31] reported a significantly higher incidence of Internet cheating as compared to college students; however, even high school students were more likely to use print sources rather than Internet sources for plagiarizing. Focus group interviews with high school students indicated they felt that teachers were often not Internet savvy enough to detect the plagiarism and the Internet sources were probably adequate for their research. While it is not possible to draw definite conclusions about the impact of the Internet on student plagiarism, several valuable insights can be gained from the research. High

schools students were significantly more likely to use the Internet for plagiarism than college students. While the lack of Internet proficiency on the part of teachers and perceived sufficiency of the sources might account for the differences, several other interpretations might be possible. These focus groups took place in 2000. Attitudes have likely changed, and probably teachers have become more technologically savvy. The survey did not indicate a significant difference in belief of the seriousness of plagiaristic behaviours on the part of high school and college students. The only significant difference was on the question "Copied a few sentences from a Web site without footnoting them" [31]. Only 46% of high school students felt this was serious behaviour, while 68% of college students felt it was serious behaviour. It is possible that over time, students who commonly plagiarize from the Internet in high school will carry these behaviours with them into college so that today the numbers might be greater. It is also possible that students in less academically rigorous colleges might display plagiaristic behaviour more in keeping with high school students than the college students who made up the studies [31]. Self-reporting by students of Internet plagiarism suffers from a limitation that is difficult to quantify. Students tend to view the Internet as an area not covered by plagiarism conventions. Livingston-Webber [32] in GenX occupies the cultural commons: Ethical practices and perceptions of fair use argued that "postmodern discourse practices of GenX culture creators put them into conflict with those who want to limit copyright practices traditionally held in the cultural commons as fair use." McCabe [31] stated: "many high school students believe—or say they believe—that if the information is on the Internet, it is public knowledge and does not need to be footnoted—even if it's quoted verbatim." Sutherland-Smith's [33] research exploring plagiarism and the Internet from the viewpoint of 11 ESL teachers and 186 first-year ESL students at South-Coast University in Melbourne, Australia indicated that "ESL students tended to view the Internet as a 'free Zone' not governed by legal proprietary rights." Out of 186 students responding to her questionnaire, 31% indicated that they do not cite Internet information. Only 2.1% responding to the questionnaire indicated that they cited all information. If students do not believe they need to cite Internet information, surveys based on self-reporting likely underreport the incidence of Internet cheating. The dichotomy between low levels of self-reported cheating and high levels of perceived cheating in the Scanlon and Neumann [30] study is a cause for serious concern. McCabe and Trevino [34] found that the perception of peer's behaviour was the most influential contextual variable in a student's ethical behaviour. "The strong influence of peers' behaviour may suggest that academic dishonesty not only is learned from observing the behaviour of peers but that peers' behaviour provides a kind of normative support for cheating" [34]. One of the first profound studies on cheating, which included plagiarism was conducted by Bowers' [35]. His study based on students is referenced in every important paper and a good number of the texts listed in this project. Most of the students responded that they had cheated, and a very small fraction of students was noticed by higher authorities [35]. Callahan [36], in his book, mentioned that students cheat because other students are also cheating and they want to

match the level of other students. McCabe, Trevino, & Butterfield's [24] study, which was conducted after 30 years of Bower's study and revealed the comparison data. Bower's [35] study, which was conducted during the pre-internet – era. There was an increase in plagiarism from 49% in 1966 to 54% in 1996, that is, not a significant shift in the frequency of plagiarism. This shows that internet usage is not the only reason which promotes plagiarism among students. The number of studies done and the research garnered reveals that there is a significant plagiarism problem. While these various studies show that many students plagiarise because they genuinely do not understand how to avoid plagiarism, other studies reveal that sometimes students do understand what it means to avoid plagiarism. Some students link their lack of concern or caution regarding plagiarism to their perception of their instructors, who either do not care or do not understand [24], [34]. These studies also show that another reason students plagiarise is that they do not understand why plagiarism is a bad form of writing or why borrowing is okay in one country but not in another. As instructors, our approach to ethically not using words that belong to someone else without proper attribution means only one thing—plagiarism has occurred. For our students, however, this ethical behaviour may be either missing or weak because they have not practiced this skill of proper citations, so they may not have the same ethical approach as many of their instructors. Blum [37] explained that in her research she found the penalties for plagiarism ranged from nothing, a slap on the wrist, an assignment redo, a low or failing grade for the assignment or the class, a hearing, a letter of ethics violation on file, a suspension, to the ultimate punishment—an expulsion from school. Students plagiarised as they have a pressure of marks, lack of interest, time constraints, less importance to assignments, and students are ignorant. Callahan [36] further supported Blum's findings that most of the plagiarism cases are not noticed or unpunished and not have consequences. Additionally, Gilmore [38] advocates that we need to give students better tools to prevent plagiarism and that we have an obligation to write better assignments, providing clear assessments that ensure students construct original work. He has a belief that plagiarism is the product of laziness. Gilmore [38] believes that few students plagiarize intentionally and that we shouldn't consider plagiarism a "disease" where we punish the students but instead help our students understand why and how they are plagiarised; and, to do this well, involves everyone—teachers, parents, and administrators. Gilmore [38] believes that Turnitin.com appears to be working, helping students find their plagiarism, although Donald McCabe [31] suggests that Turnitin be used as a learning tool. Just as Lathrop and Foss [39] recommend scaffolding parts of a writing assignment, so does Gilmore [38].

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

Early history shows that plagiarism, as we know it today, was a common practice among writers and speakers who borrowed heavily from each other. While we find the act of plagiarism egregious today, it was not uncommon for writers to copy the text of another in the past. Primarily, if we consider then the plagiarism is defined as copying without acknowledgement. Whether, it is intentional or unintentional,

it is going to contribute for unlawful offense. It is not only increasing in education, but also in politics, science, entertainment, media, business, etc [40]. Day by day, it is getting popular not only in our country but in other countries also. Many of the politicians, celebrities, scholars, etc. plagiarize and nothing happen to them except for a headline. Most of the cases of plagiarism is considered as offense not a crime in legal sense [41]. While in western countries, it is suggested that the plagiarist should be punished. On the other hand, in non – western countries in Japan, students are taught that copying without referencing is improper but not as an offense. So there is a big difference between the perspectives of two different cultured countries towards the plagiarism. If a student plans on plagiarizing, it appears logical that Internet sources would provide the easiest means [27], [42]. Most of the students justify the plagiarism actions, if the data is available to them and they can access it easily, then there is nothing wrong to use others information to complete their assignments and projects [30], [43]. In some of the cases, they are not aware that copying is an academic offense, as fewer actions were taken on this kind of behaviour. Schools are not taking actions or just giving them warnings against their copying behaviour. In addition, they have pressure of getting good marks and deadlines lead to plagiarize. Such kind of actions promotes plagiarism not only among students but also among faculty and other researchers.

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