

Self Control, Perceived Opportunity, Knowledge and Attitude as Predictors of Plagiarism by Undergraduate Students

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Self Control, Perceived Opportunity, Knowledge and Attitude as Predictors of Plagiarism by Undergraduate Students

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This study investigated plagiarism among Indonesian undergraduate students and examined whether self-control, knowledge of plagiarism, attitude towards plagiarism and perceived opportunity predict students' plagiarism. The sample consisted of 420 undergraduate students from a state university in Surabaya, Indonesia. The students completed questionnaires which collected information on demographics, plagiarism, self-control, knowledge of plagiarism, attitude towards plagiarism, and perceived opportunity. The results indicated that male students have a significantly higher self-reported plagiarism rate than female students. The mean of self-reported plagiarism varied across faculties and increased along with the length of study in the university. The students' self-reported plagiarism was predicted by a positive attitude towards plagiarism, limited knowledge of plagiarism, and low self-control. The results are discussed in terms of their implications for future research and university policies on plagiarism.

Keywords: *Self-control, opportunity, knowledge and attitude, plagiarism.*

Introduction

Plagiarism has become the most important problem for universities in Indonesia. To be considered a world-class university, it requires universities in Indonesia to detect plagiarism and make effective policies. In the short term, the plagiarism will reduce the student learning level, indeed reduce their readiness in achievement, and decrease the alumni quality. In the long term, it will reduce the academic integrity and responsibility of the alumni, which will affect the reputation of the university.



Plagiarism is a dishonesty issue that is a threat to academic integrity and educational institutions. Lupton, Chapman, and Weiss (2000) stated that cheating would present two issues at the institution level. First, cheating behaviour threatens justice and trust on assessment instruments, so student evaluation will be inaccurate. Second, the cheating habit will reduce the learning level and students will not be ready to face the future. Considering a wider community which includes students who had become alumni of the university, if some of them do not have integrity, the university might be impacted directly. The empirical research conducted by Nonis and Swift (2001) found a high correlation between cheating frequency in universities and the workplace. Maintaining academic integrity in educational institutions is a fundamental issue to make sure an environment where moral knowledge and integrity are developed and implemented together, to serve maximal advantages in individuals and society.

Plagiarism is the attitude of imitating another work and claiming it as their own and this case is a serious problem in universities. Plagiarism is often understood as a tricky attitude that can erase the intellectual property as the original author. Petress (2003) describes plagiarism as a contagious illness that has been spread in this profession, will eliminate appreciation for hard effort ethics, erase the moral value, and evaluate the role assessment items in educational institutions. The main sources of plagiarism were books, journals, encyclopedias, and newspapers, until the mid-nineteen-nineties. Nowadays, the digital era provides easy access to craft insights and learning materials through the internet and which provides a greater opportunity for plagiarism. The greater the amount of information and knowledge on the internet, enables students to copy information easily (Stebelman, 1998; Evans, 2000; Galus, 2002). In addition, the circulation of information that is often accessed free of charge raises the question if it is okay to copy without citation (Oliphant, 2002; Baruchson-Arbib & Yaari, 2004).

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Research about plagiarism has been found in North America (McCabe 2005), the United Kingdom (Selwyn, 2008), Australia (Brimble & Stevenson-Clarke, 2005; Ryan, et al. 2009), and China (Hu and Lei 2012; Mu 2010), but there are not many empirical studies that were carried out in Indonesia as the subject, despite many cases of plagiarism having been found. As revealed by Ryan et al. (2009), there is a weakness of student awareness of integrity and plagiarism. Without standards and consistency clearly in punishment, plagiarism will continue to threaten the academic integrity in universities in Indonesia. Besides external factors, such as ridges standards and rules, a previous study (Bolin, 2004; Cronan, Mullins & Douglas, 2015) also shows the various internal factors, such as self-control and attitude to plagiarism, which can influence students' behaviour facing plagiarism. This research was undertaken to answer two research questions: how does plagiarism among Indonesian undergraduate students differ based on demographic variables? Does self-control, knowledge



about plagiarism, attitude towards plagiarism and perceived opportunity predict students' plagiarism?

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Based on the explanation above, the purpose of this research is to explore the role of self-control, perceived opportunity, knowledge, and attitude towards plagiarism in students. Understanding the role in the internal factors (self-control, knowledge, and attitude in plagiarism) and the role in the external factor (perceived opportunity) towards plagiarism habits will offer the opportunity to universities to increase the suitable ways to prevent and detect plagiarism tendency in students.

Literature Review

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is stealing an idea from other people. Dis student full copied or just re-expressed the people's idea without mentioned the source, like with the robber." (Harvard University Extension School, 2007). Roberts (2008) examines several aspects of the definition of plagiarism. Firstly, the plagiarist used the ideas of others. Secondly, the plagiarist did so without clear recognition. Thirdly, the plagiarist just re-expressed the idea, or this statement did not reduce the fraud level. Plagiarism, either designed or not, is an action using the creation of other people without recognition of the source (accordingly, implicit or explicit recognition as their own idea)." (Bokosmaty, et al., 2017). Plagiarism is generally seen as more serious than it is designed. It can be distinguished starting from the most serious, such as buying plagiarised papers on the internet, down to as small as not mentioning and collecting a reference.

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Park (2003) provides several reasons for plagiarism, such as a lack of knowledge in writing, saving time and effort, a lack of trust with the lecturer, and design to cheat because of the weakness in policy. Meanwhile, the internet has fulfilled the role to increase total plagiarism nowadays (Selwyn, 2008). The limited boundaries on the internet enables students to access information and feel free to use it (Gomez, 2012; Taman 2003). Gomez (2012) and Bolin (2010) showed the misconception between 'use and ownership' and distinguished the daily internet function and for academic responsibility. Nowadays, students can apply information from the internet without including references, but this does not happen in the academic sector.

Several studies showed plagiarism can be influenced by internal and external factors. The study conducted by Hu et al. (2017) explored there are various individual factors that contribute to cheating at university. That study found demographic characteristics (gender, socioeconomic status, and duration in university), character (lack of self-control, orientation



to depend on others), college experiences (academic readiness, involvement in extracurricular activity), student perception and attitude (attitude about cheating, perception against fraud and environment in faculty and environment) are significantly related to academic dishonesty. Meanwhile, Bolin (2004) showed that attitude mediates the relationship between self-control and academic dishonesty, also between perceived opportunity and academic dishonesty. This research focussed on several factors, such as self-control, knowledge, attitude about plagiarism (internal factor) and opportunity (external factor).

Self-Control

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Tangney, Baumeister, and Boone (2004) explained that self-control is seen as a capacity to change and as adaptability to produce the goodness between self and the environment. The essence of this concept includes the ability to change people's response and prevent the trend to conduct an unwanted attitude (Yulianti & Usman, 2019). Relative with plagiarism, Bolin (2004) stated that people with low self-control are more likely to do unwanted things if there is an opportunity. Meanwhile, the higher self-control will pursue a student to do unwanted things, especially loose detection, huge opportunity, and a great advantage to reach a higher GPA (Bolan, 2004).

Knowledge about Plagiarism

Knowledge about plagiarism is one factor that influences the plagiarism attitude. The study conducted by Zimitat (2008) showed the students could identify an explicit plagiarism issue, not an implicit issue. Just changing an introduction or the arrangement is seen as a common attitude at university, even though this is categorised as plagiarism. Breen and Maassen (2005) also emphasise that the plagiarism concept came from Western countries, so other nations may never have heard of this concept. Even if the student is able to understand the core of the concept, it was unclear if the student can distinguish plagiarism clearly or not. Of course, having an impact in frequency plagiarism, either designed or not.

Attitude is an important construct in social psychology, which has been supported in several studies (Cronan, Mullins & Douglas, 2015). Various research has shown attitude is the most influential of intention-behaviour. If the students believe that cheating is not wrong, or there are weak consequences, this leads to the intention to increase the frequency of cheating, vis-a-vis (Cronan, Mullins & Douglas, 2015). Student attitude about plagiarism will shape their opportunity to cheat or not, regardless of the level of self-control (Bolin, 2004).



Perceived Opportunity

The opportunity to perform a dishonest attitude has a strong relationship with a friend's behaviour. As told in social learning theory, the student inspects other attitudes, also the consequences. The student who sees their friend succeed in cheating, is disposed to do the same thing (McCabe & Trevino, 1993). Thus, it is defined as student perception about frequency and acceptable dishonesty (in this case, plagiarism). In universities, the detection of dishonesty should be done as soon as possible (Bolin, 2004; McCabe & Trevino, 1993).

Methods

The participants of this study consisted of 420 undergraduate students from a state university in Surabaya, Indonesia. Invitations to participate in this study were sent via email to the Assistant Dean of Student Affairs from all faculties, to be forwarded to the students. The sample of this research uses 424 student responses to an online survey. Four responses were not included in the data analysis due to a longer study period (more than five years) and an invalid year of entry. There was no incomplete data as participants were forced to answer all questions in the online survey.

The data was collected using an internet survey that consisted of six sections: section one gathered demographic information about the participant; section two employed the 'Self-Control Scale' (Tangney, Baumeister & Boone, 2004); section three was a self-report of plagiarism; section four measured students' knowledge of plagiarism; section five employed the 'Attitudes toward Plagiarism Questionnaire' (Bokosmaty, Ehrich, Eady & Bell, 2017); and section six employed the 'Perceived Opportunity Scale' (Bolin, 2004; McCabe & Trevino, 1997).

All questionnaires were translated into the Indonesian language. The translation processes included a forward translation of the questionnaire by the researcher and a backward translation by a professional translator. All versions were then reviewed by the researchers to indicate comparability of the language, before being used for data collection.

Demographic information

The first section of the questionnaire collected information about participants' age, gender, faculty, course, and year of entry to the university.



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The Self-Control Scale

This 36-item scale measures self-control. The items were rated on a 5-point scale, anchored from 1 (not at all like me) to 5 (very much like me). This scale has a good internal consistency and retest reliability. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.89 (Tangney, Baumeister & Boone, 2004). The total score of this scale described the participants' self-control.

Self-report and knowledge of plagiarism

The third and fourth sections of the questionnaire were specifically developed by the researchers to measure the prevalence of plagiarism and participants' knowledge of plagiarism. Fifteen statements describing a variety of academic activities, which indicated plagiarism and non-plagiarism, were developed. In the third section, participants were asked to indicate how often they have done the activities during their study period in the current course, on a scale from 1 (never) to 4 (always). Participants' scores on 11 items indicating plagiarism were analysed, with the total score indicating the participants' act of plagiarism. In the fourth section, the same academic activities were presented, and participants were asked to rate whether the activity indicated plagiarism or not. The total score from this section indicates the participants' knowledge of plagiarism.

The Attitudes toward Plagiarism Questionnaire

This 23-item scale measures attitude towards plagiarism. The items were rated on a 5-point scale, from 1 (definitely not agree) to 5 (definitely agree). This scale has a good internal consistency, both on item and sub-scale levels (Bokosmaty, Ehrich, Eady & Bell, 2017). The total score of this scale described the participants' attitude towards plagiarism, with a higher score indicating positive attitudes or, in other words, their agreement to plagiarism.

The Perceived Opportunity Scale

This eight-item scale measures the perceived opportunity of plagiarism. The items were rated on a 5-point scale, from 1 (definitely not agree) to 5 (definitely agree). This scale has a good internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.73 (Bolin, 2004). The total score of this scale described the perceived opportunity of plagiarism, with higher scores indicating a perceived larger opportunity to plagiarise.

The data was analysed on a group basis using descriptive analysis, analysis of variance, and analysis of multiple regression on SPSS.



Reliability of the Scales

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The internal consistency coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) were computed for all scales. On the Self-Control Scale (Tangney, Baumeister & Boone, 2004), seven items (9, 11, 16, 17, 23, 25, 35) were deleted because of a low correlation with the total score. Cronbach's alpha for the scale (29 items) was 0.87, indicating a good internal consistency. On the self-report of plagiarism scale, three items (2, 5, 12) were deleted. Cronbach's alpha for the scale (eight items) was 0.69, indicating an acceptable internal consistency. Meanwhile, Cronbach's alpha for the knowledge of plagiarism scale (eight items) was 0.65, indicating an acceptable internal consistency. Seven items (2, 3, 5, 7, 12, 13, 14) were deleted. On the Attitudes toward Plagiarism Questionnaire (Bokosmaty, Ehrich, Eady & Bell, 2017), three items (10, 11, 12) were deleted, resulting in a Cronbach's alpha of 0.88, indicating a good internal consistency. Lastly, on the Perceived Opportunity Scale (Bolin, 2004; McCabe & Trevino, 1997), two items (1 and 2) were deleted. Cronbach's alpha for the scale (eight items) was 0.77, indicating a good internal consistency.

Results

Sample Characteristics

The 420 participants came from 13 faculties in the university. Almost three-quarters of the participants (71.9 per cent) were female, and 28.1 per cent were male. The participants' years of entry to the university ranged from 2013 to 2017. Table 1 below describes the distribution of participants based on their faculties:



Table 1: Participants distribution based on faculties

| | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Medicine | 25 | 6.0 |
| Dentistry | 9 | 2.1 |
| Law | 13 | 3.1 |
| Economics and Business | 55 | 13.1 |
| Pharmacy | 35 | 8.3 |
| Veterinary | 23 | 5.5 |
| Social and Political Science | 30 | 7.1 |
| Science and Technology | 32 | 7.6 |
| Public Health | 44 | 10.5 |
| Psychology | 47 | 11.2 |
| Humanities | 54 | 12.9 |
| Nursing | 20 | 4.8 |
| Fishery and Marine | 33 | 7.9 |
| Total | 420 | 100.0 |

Plagiarism among Indonesian Undergraduate Students Based on Demographic Variable

An analysis of variance was used to evaluate whether plagiarism among Indonesian undergraduate students differs based on the demographic variables of gender, faculty and year of entry. As presented in Table 2, all results were significant. Male students have a significantly higher self-reported plagiarism rate than female students. In terms of the faculty, students in the Economics and Business, and Science and Technology faculties have a significantly higher self-reported plagiarism rate than students studying Medicine, Social and Political Science, Public Health, Psychology, and Humanities. Meanwhile, Fishery and Marine students have a significantly higher self-reported plagiarism rate than students studying Social and Political Science, Public Health, Psychology, and Humanities. On the other hand, students studying Social and Political Science have a significantly lower self-reported plagiarism rate than students studying Economics and Business, Pharmacy, Veterinary, Science and Technology, Nursing, and Fishery and Marine. In regard to students' year of entry, newer students who started studying in 2017 have a significantly lower self-reported plagiarism rate than students who started studying in 2014.



Table 2: Analysis of Variance of Demographic Variables against Plagiarism

| Variables | Means (SD) | F value | Partial eta square |
|---------------|--|---------|--------------------|
| Gender | Male: 15.28 (3.63) Female: 13.32 (3.11) | 30.49* | 0.07 |
| Faculty | Medicine: 13.40 (2.63) Dentistry: 13.00 (2.18) Law: 14.00 (2.79) Economics and business: 15.89 (3.11) Pharmacy: 14.71 (3.63) Veterinary: 14.09 (3.36) Social and political science: 11.27 (2.42) Science and technology: 16.60 (3.70) Public health: 12.48 (2.23) Psychology: 12.55 (3.15) Humanities: 12.65 (2.62) Nursing: 14.84 (3.75) Fishery and marine: 13.86 (3.38) | 8.78*^ | |
| Year of entry | 2013: 14.86 (4.49) 2014: 14.70 (3.70) 2015: 13.89 (3.18) 2016: 13.36 (3.17) 2017: 13.21 (3.17) | 3.19* | 0.03 |

*significant at $p < .05$ level

^Welsh F was reported due to violation of homogeneity of variance

Figures 1 and 2 describe the mean of self-reported plagiarism based on faculties and students' year of entry into university. As shown in Figure 1, the highest self-reported plagiarism rate was observed in the Faculty of Science and Technology, and Economics and Business, while the lowest self-reported plagiarism rate was observed in the Faculty of Social and Political Science. Figure 2 describes that the mean of self-reported plagiarism increased along with the length of study in the university.



Figure 1. Mean of self-reported plagiarism based on faculties

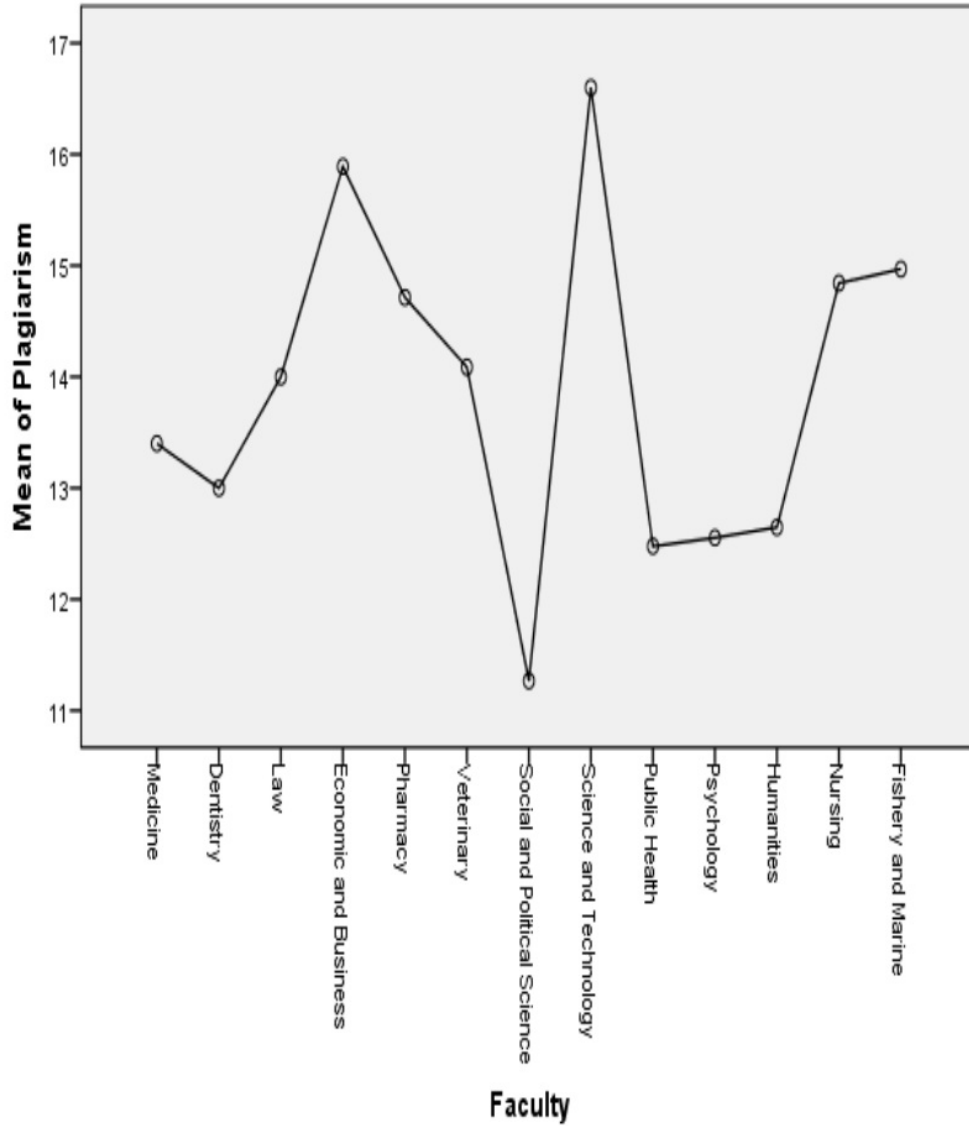
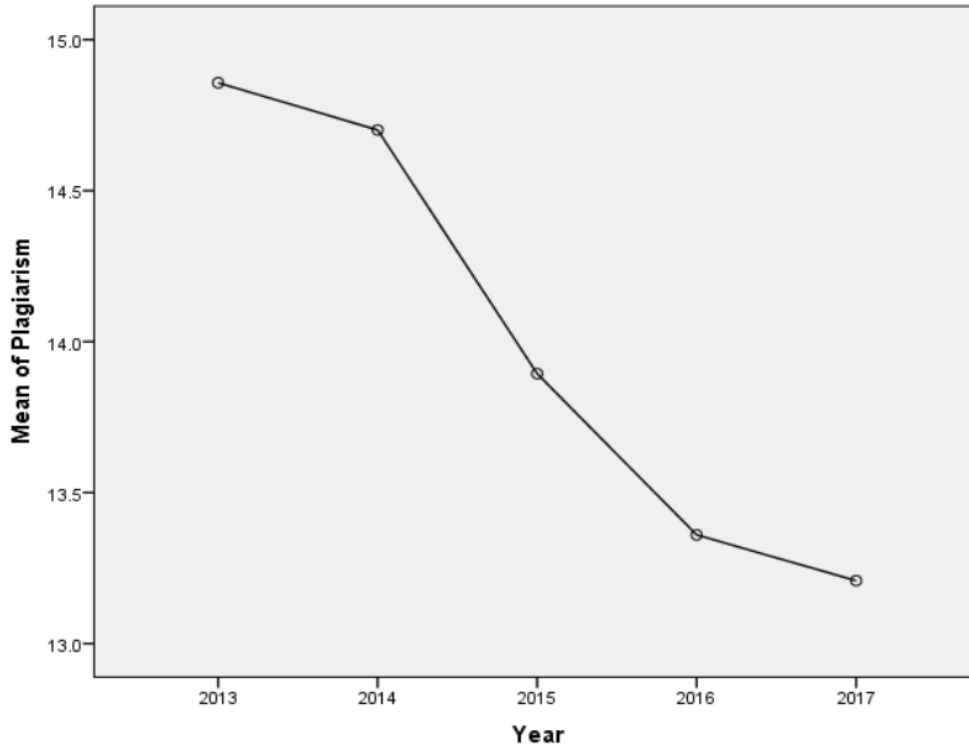




Figure 2. Mean of self-reported plagiarism based on year of entry into university



Contribution of Self-Control, Knowledge of Plagiarism, Attitude towards Plagiarism and Perceived Opportunity to Students' Plagiarism

14 A multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the relative contribution of self-control, knowledge of plagiarism, attitude towards plagiarism and perceived opportunity to students' plagiarism. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure that the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity were met. Three cases were deleted due to multicollinearity, as indicated by Mahalanobis distance. A total of 417 datasets were analysed. The result of the regression analysis is summarised in Table 3.

As described in Table 3, three predictor variables were statistically significant. Attitude towards plagiarism was a positive predictor, while self-control and knowledge of plagiarism were negative predictors. Thus, students' self-reported plagiarism was predicted by a positive attitude towards plagiarism, limited knowledge of plagiarism, and low self-control.



Table 3: Summary of regression analysis examining the contribution of self-control, knowledge of plagiarism, attitude towards plagiarism and perceived opportunity to students' plagiarism

| | | Self-control | Knowledge of plagiarism | Attitude towards plagiarism | Perceived opportunity |
|----------------------|-----------|--------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Students' plagiarism | β : | -0.159 | -0.284 | 0.307 | -0.035 |
| | t : | -3.686 | -6.490 | 6.707 | -0.838 |
| | p : | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.403 |

*significant at $p < 0.05$ level

Discussion

The Effect from Self-Control to Plagiarism Behaviour

Self-control has a negative and significant impact on plagiarism behaviour. The result of this study indicates that a higher self-control will decrease plagiarism behaviour. Self-control is the power to change response and prevent propensity when performing a bad habit. The student who has a high self-control, will keep harassment things or ignore all of the bad things. Connected with plagiarism, Bolin (2004) stated that people with a low self-control tend to do unwanted things if they have an opportunity. On the other hand, high self-control leads students to intentionally do things, if there is low detection, they have a significant opportunity, and have a significant advantage to increase to a higher GPA (Bolan, 2004).

The Effect from Knowledge to Plagiarism Behaviour

Student knowledge has a negative and significant impact on plagiarism behaviour. The results in this study indicate that a higher knowledge about plagiarism will decrease the plagiarism' behaviour; it means student comprehension about plagiarism is low. Sometimes, the student finds trouble when re-expressing information from articles, videos, or another masterpiece, so only makes a minor transformation when making connection sentences from one article to another. Besides that, the student rarely mentions the various sources. The study by Zimitat (2008) found that just altering the sentences is an okay and accepted habit by the students, even though this categorised as plagiarism. Breen and Maassen (2005) emphasise that the plagiarism concept is common in Western countries, so students from other countries may never hear of this concept. This has an impact on the frequency of the student while doing this, intentionally or not.



The Effect from Attitude to Plagiarism Behaviour

Attitude has a negative and significant impact on plagiarism behaviour. Attitude is one of the factors that most influence behaviour. If a student trusts that when cheating, it is not wrong and the punishment is low, this will lead to a higher intention to cheat, and vice versa (Cromman, Mullin, & Douglas, 2015). Attitudes about plagiarism must be built to provide serious consequences.

The Effect from Perceived Opportunity to Plagiarism Behaviour

The perceived opportunity has a negative and significant impact on plagiarism behaviour. The result of this study indicates that plagiarism behaviour happens not because there is an opportunity to do a dishonest thing and observe their friend cheating successfully (McCabe & Trevino, 1993), but when the student did not understand what is categorised as plagiarism.

Conclusions, Limitations and Future Research

The knowledge of student plagiarism has the biggest role in this study. The student did not clearly understand what was categorised as plagiarism, including changing and re-arrangement sentences. Breen and Maassen (2005) emphasise that the concept comes from Western countries, and it could be that students of other countries have never heard of the concept. Therefore, they cannot differentiate clearly whether it is plagiarism or not. Future research can explore plagiarism from the perspective of providing students with a greater understanding of not only the actions but also the consequences of plagiarism.



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