AJEMATES
African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies
VOL.13 (2), September-December, 2024 https://ajemates.org

# THEORETICAL REVIEW OF THE CONCEPT OF PLAGIARISM

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper discusses the origin, types, consequences, causes, index and control of plagiarism among scholars. The desktop research approach was adopted for the study. It revealed that plagiarism is the academic theft of one's previous scholarly (or artistic) work or another person's scholarly (or artistic) work. Plagiarism index is a numerical indicator of the percentage of a particular document is similar to the opinions and ideas expressed in the earlier authors' works that are in the database. The types of plagiarism identified included: rogeting, contract cheating, and self-plagiarism among others. The major cause of plagiarism is immorality which makes scholars to ignore ethical requirements for academic writing and artistic creations. It deemed plagiarism to be a disgraceful act with penalties. It recommended the control of plagiarism through certain concerted efforts by the institutional management.*

**Keywords:** Origin, Types, Consequences, Causes, Index, Control, Plagiarism, Scholars

## Introduction

The advancement of information and communication technologies and digital revolution has transformed the availability and accessibility of information. This seems to have made plagiarism incidence to be on the increase. Information can now be easily available in print and non-print formats. Thus, the rate of stealing information is also increasing every day in institutions. This trend has led to the penalization of plagiarism. It is a form of academic dishonesty or fraud, and offenders are often subject to academic censure, up to and including expulsion for students and termination of contracts for scholars and researchers. Plagiarism detection software is used by some educational institutions to detect potential plagiarism and to discourage students from plagiarizing. Unfortunately, plagiarism detection software may not always yield accurate results (Weber-Wulff, 2019). Many universities address the issues of plagiarism and academic integrity thorough orientation programmes and academic writing courses (Lipson, 2003). Most scholars now know that plagiarism is wrong (Lipson, 2003). However, many of them are brought

before their institutions' disciplinary boards on charges that related to plagiarism (Lipson, 2003). The Library Science is addressing the issue of *plagiarism* at institutional levels (George, 2013).

**Origin of Plagiarism**

The origin of plagiarism could be linked to the Latin word *plagiarius*, which was used in the first century in a complaint by the Roman poet, Marcus Valerius Martialis, known as Martial (40 – 104 AD). He was a renowned Roman poet who was born in Hispania (modern Spain). His work comprises 1,561 epigrams arranged into twelve volumes, which were written between AD 86 and 103. The Latin word literarily means "kidnapper". He complained that another artist had kidnapped his verses. This was during the reigns of the emperors Domitian, Nerva, and Trajan (Plagiarism Today, 2011).

Martial, like many poets of his time, discovered that his work was being copied and recited wholesale by other poets without acknowledging him. It was a very common act during the time. Poets were expected to be able to recite and relay earlier works than create original ones. However, Martial was not pleased with allowing others take his work. Though there was copyright law or any legal step that he could take, he made use of the tool he had available to him, which were his words. He wrote several verses aimed at correcting those who were copying his poems, particularly, an alleged plagiarist, Fidentinus. It was in one of those poems that he used the Latin word *plagiarus* to describe an unnamed literary thief. The word had meant "kidnap" and it was specifically related to either the kidnapping of people with the intention of making them slaves. Martial was less concerned with acknowledgement of the originality of his work, but more concerned with payment for them.

The term took about fifteen centuries before it could make its way into English Language. The word '*Plagiary'*, a derivative of *plagiarus*, was introduced into English in 1601 by dramatist Ben Jonson to describe literary theft while describing a copycat (Lynch, 2002; Valpy, 2005). While another derived form, *plagiarism*, was used to refer to stealing or theft in English around 1620 (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2021). The word first appeared in a dictionary in 1755. This was about forty years after the promulgation of the copyright law, which was referred to as the *Statute of Anne.* Both the act and the word "plagiarism" became famous in the Age of Enlightenment, when a much higher emphasis was laid on originality in creative works.

**Concept of plagiarism**

Plagiarism refers to academic theft of one's previous scholarly (or artistic) work or another person's scholarly (or artistic) work. Though it is referred to as theft, it

has not been criminalized in any statute. In Nigeria, plagiarism does not appear either in the criminal code or in the penal code. It is not likely to have appeared in the statute of any country. However, it is an immoral act. Whenever the act infringes on the copyright of the original author, the copyright law can be applied and the plagiarist may be sanctioned by the court.

It has been defined in the different ways by different authors. The following institutions defined plagiarism as indicated below:

1) The Educational Dialogue Association: “the use of another person’s published or unpublished ideas or opinions without proper acknowledgement in form of in-text and end of document referencing” (EDUDIA, 2023).
2) The Global Education Network: “incorporation of the creative ideas or opinions of others (whether published or not) into one’s document or artistic creation without referencing the original author” (Fabunmi, 2024).
3) The Oxford College of Emory University: use of "a writer's ideas or phraseology without giving due credit" (Oxford, 2012).
4) The Princeton University: “use of "someone else's language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source" (Princeton, 2012).
5) The Research and Dialogue Hub UK: “using the original academic or artistic work of another person(s) without acknowledging the original author(s)” (R&DH-UK, 2024).
6) The Stanford University: "use, without giving reasonable and appropriate credit to or acknowledging the author or source, of another person's original work, whether such work is made up of code, formulas, ideas, language, research, strategies, writing or other form" (Standford, 2020).
7) The U. S. Naval Academy: "the use of the words, information, insights, or ideas of another without crediting that person through proper citation" (USNA, 2017).
8) The Yale University "use of another's work, words, or ideas without attribution", which includes "... using a source's language without quoting, using information from a source without attribution, and paraphrasing a source in a form that stays too close to the original" (Yale, 2015).

**Types of plagiarism**

Plagiarism may take the following forms:

1) Rogeting: This is the practice of plagiarizing by using sufficient word substitutions to elude detection software (Grove, 2014; Mario, 2003).
2) Contract cheating or direct plagiarism: It involves hiring someone else, such as an essay mill, to do their work for them (Newton, 2016). In some countries, there are laws that prohibit the operation or the promotion of contract cheating services (Draper, 2021).
3) Direct plagiarism: It is when certain sections or paragraphs are inserted or used without crediting or acknowledging the original author by way of referencing. It occurs when a line or two from the original document directly into one's work without quoting or citing the source (Grammarly, 2024).
4) Paraphrasing plagiarism: This is when a writer changes a few words or phrases from another person's work and incorporates into his own work without referencing the original author. This seems to be common among writers (Grammarly, 2024).
5) Patchwork plagiarism: It is otherwise known as mosaic plagiarism. It refers to where the plagiarized work is interwoven with the writer's original work. It may be a clause that was taken from another author's work and inserted in a sentence of one's work (Grammarly, 2024).
6) Source-based plagiarism: This is where the writer references a secondary source in their work, but only credit the primary source which the secondary source was derived or cites an incorrect source and even making up sources (Grammarly, 2024).
7) Accidental plagiarism: It is when the writer doesn't realize they are plagiarizing another author's work. It also includes forgetting to reference sources used, not citing sources correctly, and failing to put quotes around the cited material (Grammarly, 2024).
8) Self-plagiarism: This entails taking passages from one's own previous work without citations (Turnitin, 2018).

**Consequences of plagiarism**

The consequences of plagiarism may include the following:

(i) Severe disciplinary actions for students: The students who plagiarised could face severe disciplinary actions like suspension or expulsion from their schools.
(ii) Termination of appointment: The appointments of plagiarists who are employees could be terminated.

(iii) Destruction of plagiarised work: The plagiarised works could be destroyed as the culprits would certainly not be allowed to benefit from their acts of dishonesty and stealing.

(iv) Legal action: Where plagiarism is a copyright infringement the court may impose fines and some other penalties. Certain cases may be treated as unfair competition, or violation of the doctrine of moral rights of the original author (Green, 2002).

**Index of Plagiarism**

Plagiarism index is a numerical indicator of the percentage of a particular document is similar to the opinions and ideas expressed in the earlier authors' works that are in the database. It is otherwise referred to as similarity index, which is a less offensive or derogatory term. It is not an indicator as to whether a scholar has or has not plagiarized as he might have plagiarised an unpublished work or a published document that is not in the database. The National College of Ireland (Turnitin, 2024) in an answer to one of the frequently asked questions recommended that the similarity index should not exceed 20 percent. There is no global benchmark yet. Each educational institution or establishment determines the acceptable plagiarism index.

**Causes of plagiarism**

The causes of plagiarism include the following:

1) Lack of ethical awareness: Many scholars may not be aware or chose to ignore ethical requirements for academic writing and artistic creations (Guaraya & Guarava, 2017).
2) Procrastination: Scholars who procrastinate will likely plagiarize, because of the pressure to meet up deadlines.
3) Absence of punishment for plagiarism: Wherever not penalty is imposed on potential plagiarists, there is the temptation for scholars to plagiarize.
4) Low self- esteem: Scholars with low self-esteem are likely to result to plagiarism as they are likely to doubt their ability to produce original products.
5) Poor writing skills: Scholars who lack knowledge and writing skills, particularly in the area of referencing or sources' acknowledgement may like plagiarize (Voelker et al, 2012; Nweton et al., 2014; Khadilka, 2018).
6) Poor time management and busy schedule: When a scholar has a tight schedule and he is not able to manage his time well, there is the likelihood to plagiarize (Kayaoglu et al., 2016).
7) Strive for undue recognition: Scholars who are in a haste to

publish quickly may be tempted to plagiarize (Wei et Al., 2014).

8) Deficiency in social responsibility to budding scholars: Schools with management teams that are deficient guiding or mentoring upcoming scholars may produce a number of plagiarists (Pecorari and Petric, 2014)
9) Internet plagiarism: The easy access to computers, internet and other electronic resources such as CD-ROM encyclopedias has made cheating easy for fraudulent scholars who may end up plagiarizing (Renard (2000; Ramzan et al., 2012).

**Control of the incidence of plagiarism**

The incidence of plagiarism could be reduced through the following steps:

a) Re-orientation of scholars: Orientation programs on academic writing and plagiarism should be organized periodically for scholars.
b) Emphasizing originality and scholarship: Educational institutions should emphasise honesty and originality among their scholars. Teaching and learning should be improved (Onuoha (2016).
c) Plagiarism check and control: Educational authorities should insist on plagiarism checks of academic paper from scholars.
d) Stringent penalties: Institutions and employers should impose stiff penalties on those who plagiarize. The scholars and researchers who plagiarise could be subjected to a number of sanctions ranging from suspension to termination, in addition to loss of credibility and perceived integrity (Knock, 1999; Knoch and Davidson, 2003).
e) Acquisition of time management skills: Scholars should endeavor to acquire time management skills so that they will not be pressurized into plagiarising others works.
f) Teaching of writing skills: Adequate emphasis should be placed on equipping scholars with necessary academic writing skills at all levels of education (Pecorari and Petric, 2014).

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study established the origin, types, consequences, causes, index and control of plagiarism among scholars. It revealed that plagiarism is the academic theft of one's previous scholarly (or artistic) work or another person's scholarly (or artistic) work. Plagiarism index is a numerical indicator of the percentage of a particular document is similar to the opinions and ideas expressed in the earlier authors' works that are in the database. It identified the following eight types of plagiarism. The major cause of plagiarism is immorality which makes scholars to ignore ethical requirements for academic writing and artistic creations. It deemed plagiarism to be a disgraceful act with penalties. It recommended the control of

plagiarism through certain concerted efforts by the institutional management.

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