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EFL College Students' Plagiarism: An Assessment of their Undergraduate Research Projects and Perceptions

Dr. Tahsin Hussein Rassul*

English Department, College of Basic Education, Salahaddin University-Erbil

E-mail: tahsin.rassul@su.edu.krd

Asst. Instructor: Ihsan Saber Shafiq

English Department, College of Basic Education, Salahaddin University-Erbil

E-mail: ihsan.shafiq@su.edu.krd

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Abstract

Owing to vastly increasing practice of plagiarism at university level, it is vital that university teachers understand students' beliefs about plagiarism and the nature of plagiarism at their institutions. This article investigates senior EFL college students' perceptions of plagiarism seriousness and reasons for plagiarism via utilizing a questionnaire comprised of two sections. Furthermore, it focuses on assessing the students' practice of plagiarism in their undergraduate research projects through first using 'Turnitin' program to check similarity index percentage, and then manually checking plagiarism types. Face validity of the questionnaire and the inter-rater reliability for manual checking were estimated by SPSS. The current research is restricted to a sample of 53 college students at the English Department of College of Basic Education/ Salahaddin University-Erbil in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq for the academic year 2020-2021. Additionally, 29 of their undergraduate research projects were randomly selected for assessment. This study depends on a mixed method approach via adopting both qualitative and quantitative research designs. To achieve the aims of this research based on the collected and analyzed data, the researchers responded to five study questions.

	Results revealed that there is inconsistency in the similarity index percentage of their research projects. Moreover, not only were the practiced types of plagiarism found, but also the most common type of plagiarism was highlighted in their research projects. In addition, the students viewed some types of plagiarism as more serious ones based on the found mean of each type. Among 27 reasons, 14 reasons were considered as the most common reasons of plagiarism based on the found percentage. Finally, the study offered some recommendations for university teachers on how to improve students' academic integrity and deter students from committing plagiarism acts in the future.
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السراقات العلمية لمتعلمي اللغة الانكليزية كلغة أجنبية من طلبة الكليات:
تقويم لمشاريع بحوثهم في التخرج

د. تحسين حسين رسول

قسم اللغة الانكليزية، كلية التربية، جامعة صلاح الدين/ اربيل

م.ى. احسان صابر شفيق

قسم اللغة الانكليزية، كلية التربية، جامعة صلاح الدين/ اربيل

<p>الخلاصة: نظرا لازدياد عمليات السرقة العلمية في الجامعة بشكل ملفت للنظر يجدر بأساتذة الجامعات أن يكونوا على دراية بأراء طلاب الجامعة فيما يخص السراقات العلمية؛ ويفهموا طبيعة هذه السراقات في مؤسستهم. يدرس هذا البحث آراء الطلاب حول مستوى شدة السراقات العلمية وأسبابها؛ من خلال الاعتماد على استبيان يتكون من قسمين. فضلا عن ذلك يؤكد البحث على تقييم عمليات السراقات العلمية التي يقوم بها الطلاب في بحوث تخرجهم بالاعتماد على برنامج (Turnitin) وذلك لتحديد النسبة المئوية للتوافق أو الشبه أولاً؛ ومن ثم تحديد أنواع السراقات العلمية يدوياً. وقد تم تخمين صحة الاستبيان وثبات تحديد أنواع السراقات العلمية يدوياً عن طريق استخدام برنامج (SPSS). شارك في هذا الاستبيان ٥٣ طالباً وطالبة من قسم اللغة الانكليزية بكلية التربية الأساس - جامعة صلاح الدين اربيل في إقليم كردستان العراق للسنة الدراسية ٢٠٢٠-٢٠٢١. وقد أختير لهذا التقييم تسعة و عشرون بحثاً بصورة عشوائية؛ وقد اعتمدت هذه الدراسة على أسلوب أو</p>	<p>الكلمات الدالة:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- السرقة العلمية- مستوى الشدة- الأسباب- طالب الكلية- بحث التخرج- الآراء <p>معلومات البحث تاريخ البحث:</p> <p>الاستلام: ١٢-١٠-٢٠٢١ القبول: ٥-١٢-٢٠٢١ التوفر على النت 23-1-2022</p>
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طريقة الخلط؛ عن طريق استخدام أسلوب البحث النوعي والكمي. ومن أجل تحقيق أهداف هذه الدراسة - واعتماداً على البيانات التي تم استحصالتها وتحليلها - أجاب الباحثان على أسئلة البحث الخمس. وقد بينت النتائج وجود عدم تشابه في تطابق النسبة المئوية في بحوث تخرجهم؛ فضلاً عن إيجاد أنواع عمليات السرقات العلمية؛ فقد تم تحديد أكثر أنواع السرقات العلمية شيوعاً في هذه البحوث أيضاً. وقد بين الطلاب أنّ بعضاً من هذه السرقات كان أشد وأكثر حضوراً وذلك اعتماداً على مبدأ (الوسط الحسابي) لكل نوع منها. ومن بين 27 سبباً تم تحديد 14 سبباً كأكثر أسباب السرقات العلمية شيوعاً وذلك بالاعتماد على تحديد النسبة المئوية. وفي النهاية عرضت الدراسة بعض المقترحات لاساتذة الجامعيين حول كيفية حفظ الأمانة والنزاهة الأكاديمية للطلاب وتطويرها؛ وإبعادهم عن عملية السرقات العلمية في المستقبل.

1. Introduction

Nowadays due to the computer revolution, the practice of plagiarism has dramatically increased. Besides, one of the ethical and big academic issues in higher education is students' plagiarism and how to avoid it. As a result, strict measures are currently being used to combat it at the university level globally.

Based on research results, a rising number of university students face academic dishonesty which is considered unacceptable by academics (McCabe & Bowers, 1994; Diekhoff, et al., 1996). Park (2003) conducted a study where 6000 US students were surveyed. The research results showed that from 63% to 87% (based on academic discipline) of students had faced academic dishonesty during their university study.

In the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, there is scant attention to research on university students' views of and reasons for plagiarism and on assessing undergraduate students' research projects. Thus, the current research results may implicate main causes and types of students' plagiarism in their undergraduate research projects, and eventually suggest some strategies to detect and prevent plagiarism for the university academics. The current article investigates students' views on what is deemed plagiarism and what causes plagiarism in their undergraduate research projects. Additionally, it assesses their research projects to show the rate and types of plagiarism.

Howard (1995, p. 799) defines plagiarism as "the representation of a source's words or ideas as one's own." She also indicates that plagiarism happens when someone fails to provide quotation marks or block indentation for exact quotations; fails to cite the sources of his/ her ideas; or uses the phrasing of his or her sources with some changes in grammar or word choice regardless of acknowledging the source¹ (Howard, 1995).

Besides, plagiarism is one of the practices considered by universities to generate a lack of academic integrity which is "a term used to describe a practice that involves

knowingly taking and using another person's **work** and claiming it, directly or indirectly, as your own" (Neville, 2007, p. 28).

The word 'work' implies something produced by another person and published in any tangible form, but someone else claims to be his/ her own original work. Neville (2007, p. 28) states that the word 'work' also involves assignments ordered and bought from websites which are then presented to an institution by the buyer as his or her own original work. As local cases of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), it also includes assignments produced by or bought from a writing service, print or photocopy shop, experienced person, or alumni which are then claimed by someone as his or her original work in an institution.

Furthermore, Wang (2008, p. 743) defines plagiarism as "using someone else's work (words and thoughts) without attribution."

The researchers provide their own definition of plagiarism in this study as "it is representing someone else's words or ideas (partially or fully) as someone's own work without properly acknowledging the source".

Based on literature review, plagiarism has been tackled in research in various ways due to the complexity of its relevant attributes and factors. Among students' characteristics which implicate the probable incidents of committing plagiarism are 'motivation', 'achievement', and 'personality' (Rettinger & Kramer, 2009; Williams, et al., 2010). Additionally, students' viewpoints on the ethical norms and considerations of academic dishonesty are investigated in another study (Colnerud & Rosander, 2009). Research has also implicated the instructional style as the reason for plagiarism (Barnas, 2000). Besides, some studies focus on the technology-related causes of plagiarism, such as 'easily copying and pasting online materials' (Wang, 2008; Trushell, et al., 2011).

2. Students' Perceptions of Plagiarism

Research has indicated that many lecturers are confused about what causes students to commit plagiarism acts: carelessness, ignorance, misunderstanding, confusion, or poor referencing practice (Neville, 2007). On the other hand, they will be very angry as they see students have copied extensively from a source without acknowledging the source (Ibid).

There are many studies conducted to investigate students' views of and/or reasons for plagiarism in their assignments including:

A study conducted by Howard (1995) in America shows that learners usually understand that the used sources in their assignments need to be cited but do not always cite them due to a variety of reasons, such as facing with an enormous workload, having easy access to materials, pressure to pass on degree courses, likelihood of copying from a printed source or pasting from the Internet into their assignments wishing not to be perceived.

In another study by Jones et al. (2005) in the United Kingdom used a questionnaire to report the views of 91 students from Engineering programmes and 80 students from Psychology programmes concerning plagiarism and other forms of academic impropriety in coursework assignments and projects. The results indicated that the most likely reasons of their plagiarism were: lecturers' poor capability in identifying internet sites used by students; and respondents' highly positive attitudes towards copying some sentences out of a textbook, journal, website, or a friend's assignment without crediting the source.

A study in America by Roig (1997) manifested that, among 316 undergraduate students who were asked to classify adapted versions of texts as plagiarised or

paraphrased, half of them regarded six out of eight ‘plagiarized texts’ as ‘correctly paraphrased’.

In their study, Fish and Hura (2013) asked 626 university students in a questionnaire to show their opinions and experiences concerning plagiarism. A majority of respondents indicated that the more the extent of material taken from another author without citing is, the more serious the plagiarism will be. Besides, most students supposed that using another author’s ideas is at least *somewhat serious*. Furthermore, nearly all of the study participants believed that copying whole work written by another writer was *very serious*.

Additionally, a study by Jones (2011) indicated that all learners considered submitting a whole work of another author as plagiarism; they believed that copying a limited amount of someone else’s work is less serious than the whole work; three quarters of them considered buying a paper on the web as plagiarism; 67% of them indicated that copying a paragraph without quotation marks is regarded plagiarism; half of them showed that paraphrasing text without citation as plagiarism; plus 17% of them believed that learners should not self-plagiarize by resubmitting an assignment in another class.

Furthermore, a study by Kwong et al (2010) aimed at examining the faculty members’ and students’ perceptions of plagiarism as well as the reasons behind committing plagiarism acts in Hong Kong. The tools of the study were questionnaire and interview. The results revealed that the staff members consider most types of plagiarism as more serious than their learners believe. Besides, the study reasons for students’ plagiarism were considered as “lack of time to complete the task or poor time management skills; insufficient reward for (perceived) effort or desire for efficiency; over-full curricula; fear of a poor mark or of disappointing others; the perception that they can ‘get away with it’; or the desire to defy authority” (p. 342).

According to a study by Mann and Frew (2006) with focus on learners from China and Hong Kong, learners from non-English speaking countries can steal idea from their own native-language sources and translate them into English for their assignments with the probability of being unaware of the case considered as plagiarism. These scholars also assert that plagiarism tools cannot detect the text from a book which is not available on the web. Thus, human intervention is also needed after checking the similarity report of the tool to check the text out for plagiarism incidents (Meo & Talha, 2019).

In a distributed questionnaire at a Brazil university on plagiarism, a study by Guedes and Filho (2015) showed that all of the participated (199 dentistry undergraduate) learners considered plagiarism as a crime.

To the researchers’ best knowledge, KRI public universities have not made standardizations of plagiarism detection and penalty, and the students’ undergraduate research projects and assignments are not saved in an online database to avoid future plagiarism cases. Additionally, the students’ work is usually not submitted through plagiarism checkers online.

Types of Plagiarism

There are various categories of plagiarism due to the reason that each institution tends to offer its own definition or interpretation of plagiarism. Howard (1995, p. 799) mentions that there are three different forms of plagiarism, namely “*cheating*” (i.e., buying, borrowing, or obtaining work produced by another person and submitting it under one’s own name); “*non-attribution of sources*” (failing to properly acknowledge what has been quoted precisely or cited with modification); and “*patchwriting*” (as Neville (2007, p. 29) describes it as “putting together bits of sorted, copied texts to make up an unsatisfactory whole”). Stolar (2020) states that “regardless of the type,

whether the plagiarism was done on purpose or by accident, it is still plagiarism and could still lead to negative consequences”.

Moreover, Streefkerk (2018) states that there are six types of plagiarism, namely “*global plagiarism, paraphrasing plagiarism, verbatim plagiarism, mosaic plagiarism, incorrect citation, self-plagiarism*”. This author, as well as some others, indicate the *seriousness level* of each type.

2.1. Global Plagiarism

Streefkerk (2018) asserts that presenting another author’s entire work as your own which is regarded a severe type of plagiarism and “can have severe consequences”. Howard (1995) calls it “cheating” and also believes that it is the most serious one. This type of plagiarism involves taking, purchasing, copying an entire work of another author and claiming as one’s own original work intentionally (Ibid).

2.2. Paraphrasing Plagiarism

This type involves “rephrasing” another author’s text or ideas without acknowledging the original author and is considered a “serious” type of plagiarism which is also said to be the most common one (Streefkerk, 2018).

Plagiarism occurs via paraphrasing when a source is read and then some changes in grammar or word choice are made regardless of acknowledging the source (Howard, 1995). This type of plagiarism is also called “too close paraphrasing” (Yale.edu., 2015) and “has no place in academic writing” (Bristol.ac.uk., 2015). Roka (2017, p. 4) calls it “find-replace” as this process is easily done by computer.

Mann and Frew (2006) believe that students from non-English speaking countries resort to stealing ideas from their own native-language sources through translation. Translating a text from another language and using it as one’s own work without citing the original source is also considered paraphrasing plagiarism as the ideas are stolen in this case (Streefkerk, 2018).

2.3. Verbatim Plagiarism (Copy & Paste; Direct plagiarism)

This type of plagiarism occurs when directly copying a part of an author’s work and claiming as one’s own without crediting the original source (Streefkerk, 2018). It occurs when a part(s) of text is copied word-for-word from an author’s work and then pasted into one’s own work without using citations (Stolar, 2020). According to Stolar (2020), “copying a section, or a paragraph, or a few sentences” is verbatim plagiarism and considered “a serious type of plagiarism” due to claiming the ownership of another author’s source material. Besides, Streefkerk (2018) regards verbatim plagiarism as a “serious” type as well.

2.4. Mosaic Plagiarism (Patchwork Plagiarism/ Incremental Plagiarism)

According to Streefkerk (2018), it is copying and then blending “phrases, passages, and ideas from different sources” without citing them “to create a new text”. The new writer uses “a little more effort than just copying and pasting from a source” to somewhat rephrase the texts or ideas without giving acknowledgement to the original authors but it is “easily detected by plagiarism checkers”, e.g. Turnitin (Ibid). Wald (2020) believes that this type of plagiarism is “a crime”. Moreover, Streefkerk (2018) considers it a “serious” type of plagiarism. It happens when a new writer takes portions of the original sources and stitches them all together to make a whole without referring to the used sources (Stolar, 2020). According to her, this kind of plagiarism could involve different incidents, such as:

-Exactly copying a part from a source, but paraphrasing another portion from another source to come up with a new paragraph without documenting the sources.

-Copying phrases or passages from different sources and putting them together in a paragraph to pretend as a new text without acknowledging the used sources (Stolar, 2020).

2.5. Incorrect Citation

This sort of plagiarism occurs when someone fails to provide all the required information for citing any used source (Streefkerk, 2018). According to Streefkerk (2018), this type of plagiarism involves many incidents, including:

- failing to use a correct and consistent format of citation for intext or bibliography;
- failing to include all the required details for citation, such as page no., quotation marks, block indentation, etc.; and
- putting citations in a wrong place whether it is the in-text citation or the reference list.

Additionally, using information of a secondary source but only citing the primary source of information is also considered as inaccurate plagiarism (Unikllib, 2016). According to Neville (2007, p. 29) believes that this sort of plagiarism may happen due to “the inexperience of the student with referencing or from misunderstanding about academic conventions”. Therefore, Streefkerk (2018) considers it a “moderate” type of plagiarism, but is still subject to disciplinary action (Stolar, 2020).

2.6. Self-plagiarism

It means reusing text or ideas from one’s own previously submitted/ published work and claiming as new work. It can include re-submitting the text or ideas of the previous paper partially or fully without crediting the source (Streefkerk, 2018). Furthermore, Roig (2010) indicates that self-plagiarism in education occurs when a writer recycles his or her previously submitted or published work, partially or fully, in a new work without providing due acknowledgment for the former work. It is believed that self-plagiarism is moderate plagiarism as far as partial texts and ideas are reused unintentionally; but re-submitting the previously submitted work entirely is considered severe plagiarism (Streefkerk, 2018; Roig, 2010).

Based on their level of severity, all the types of plagiarism, whether committed intentionally or by accident, are subject to disciplinary actions, such as failure, suspension, expelling, and putting on academic probation.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

To collect data for the present work, the researchers asked the EFL senior students at the English Department of College of Basic Education, Salahaddin University-Erbil to respond to a questionnaire in the academic year 2020-2021. The population of senior students in the English Department is 80 students who were asked to participate in answering the questionnaire, whereas only 53 of them returned the questionnaire.

3.2. The Aims

The present paper aims at shedding light on some issues related to academic dishonesty in the students’ undergraduate research projects where the amount and types of plagiarism are targeted to be revealed. Furthermore, the study focuses on investigating the participants’ perceptions of plagiarism seriousness and of its reasons.

3.3. Research Questions

The researchers need to respond to the following questions pertinent to the mentioned aims:

1. Is there relative consistency in the similarity index percentage of the undergraduate research projects?
2. What are plagiarism types in the research projects?
3. Which plagiarism type is the most common one in the research projects?
4. Do students view some types of plagiarism as more serious than others?
5. What are the students' most common reasons for plagiarism?

Procedures

First, the researchers designed a questionnaire in Google Forms, and then its face validity was checked. Next, it was administered to the participants of the study to show their ideas of both plagiarism seriousness and its reasons. After that, 29 of their undergraduate research projects were randomly selected and subsequently checked by "Turnitin". Finally, the types of plagiarism were manually found in the research projects, and the reliability was considered.

3.4. Research Tools

In the current study, a questionnaire with closed-ended items was utilized to collect data. The questionnaire had two sections: the first section with 17 items focused on students' estimations of plagiarism seriousness on a scale of four points, namely 'not plagiarism'(1), 'moderate plagiarism'(2), 'serious plagiarism'(3), and 'severe plagiarism'(4); and its second part was about the students' ideas of their plagiarism reasons in their undergraduate research projects via using 24 multiple answers in a single multiple-choice item. The questionnaire was checked with Cronbach's alpha reliability in SPSS to estimate the extent of items interrelation internally which was (0.703) for 17 Likert Scale Items. Besides, Turnitin was used to reveal the extent of similarity index in the randomly selected undergraduate research projects. After that, the researchers used the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient to find the consistency of inter-rater reliability via selecting another university teacher to re-assess each of the students' research projects². Consequently, the reliability value of the assessors for each found plagiarism type was estimated to be highly consistent³ (See Appendix 1 for more details relevant to this reliability).

4. Data Collection and Analysis

To answer the first research question (*Is there relative consistency in the similarity index percentage of the undergraduate research projects?*), the similarity index percentage was estimated by Turnitin programme for each of the investigated research projects. In other words, the 29 projects were submitted through Turnitin program to show whether there is relative consistency in the similarity index percentage of the projects. The Turnitin estimated results indicated that the similarity index percentage is inconsistent among the research projects as manifested in Table 1.

Table 1: The Estimated Similarity Percentage in Each Undergraduate Research Project

Research projects	The Similarity Index Percentage by Turnitin	The Percentage of Used Internet Sources	Word Count of Each Project ⁴
1	59 %	59 %	2957

2	54 %	50 %	4326
3	72 %	70 %	2715
4	57 %	53 %	4440
5	22 %	17 %	3914
6	63 %	62 %	4053
7	65 %	62 %	6003
8	60 %	60 %	5343
9	64 %	62 %	4400
10	50 %	50 %	1374
11	42 %	40 %	4960
12	59 %	58 %	3551
13	21 %	11 %	3311
14	48 %	48 %	2411
15	35 %	25 %	5814
16	25 %	20 %	3418
17	62 %	61 %	3466
18	42 %	40 %	4762
19	85 %	78 %	3156
20	80 %	80 %	3586
21	70 %	58 %	4637
22	78 %	77 %	4708
23	66 %	64%	3592
24	10 %	9 %	3178
25	70 %	70 %	4712
26	45 %	41 %	4248
27	73 %	70 %	4034
28	56 %	53 %	3696
29	65 %	63 %	3191
Mean	55 %	52 %	3930

Dependent upon the results of Turnitin in the above table, one can notice that the highest similarity index is **85** percent, whilst the lowest rate of similarity index is **10** percent as shown in Table 1 above. This could be attributed to two main reasons mentioned by students in their responses to the questionnaire, namely: (Item C) *University teachers do not focus on the originality rate in students' writing assignments;* and (Item D) *University teachers do not check plagiarism in the research projects.* (Scrutinize Figure 2, for the percentage of the students' plagiarism reasons in each item).

Regarding the second research question (*What are plagiarism types in the research projects?*), only four plagiarism types were detected, namely *paraphrasing plagiarism*, *Verbatim plagiarism*, *Mosaic Plagiarism*, and *Incorrect Citation*. Due to lack of an available database for the students' previously submitted assignments and research projects, the researchers could not find any incidents of 'global plagiarism' and 'self-plagiarism' after having run the research projects through Turnitin program (See Appendix 2, for the snapshots of plagiarism types in the students' undergraduate research projects). The detected types of plagiarism and the total rate of each type are depicted in Figure 1 (See Appendix 3, for more details concerning the frequency of plagiarism types in each research project).

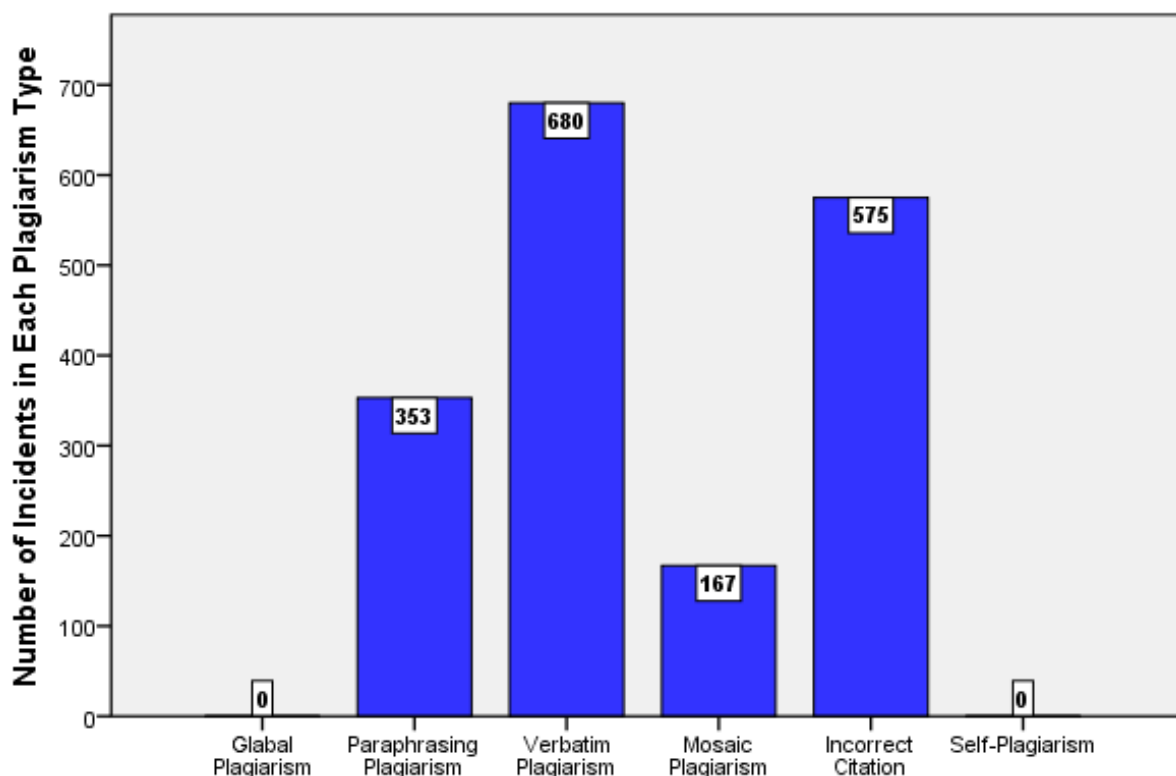


Figure 1: Frequency of Each Plagiarism Type in Students' Undergraduate Research Projects

Based on the number of incidents of each plagiarism type in the undergraduate research projects manifested in Figure 1, the most prevalent type of plagiarism is *Verbatim Plagiarism* making a total of 680 incidents. This is a clear response to the third research question (*Which plagiarism type is the most common one in the research projects?*). The highest rate of verbatim plagiarism could be ascribed to the reason that it is the easiest type among the four detected ones as it can be committed by simply copying and pasting from online materials without adding to or modifying the text (See Table 1, for the highly estimated percentage of used internet-sources in each undergraduate research project).

With Regard to the fourth study question (*Do students view some types of plagiarism as more serious than others?*), the mean of plagiarism seriousness in each type was calculated by SPSS based on the students' results in the questionnaire as displayed in Table 2 (To check the detailed table of frequencies and percentages, refer to Appendix 4).

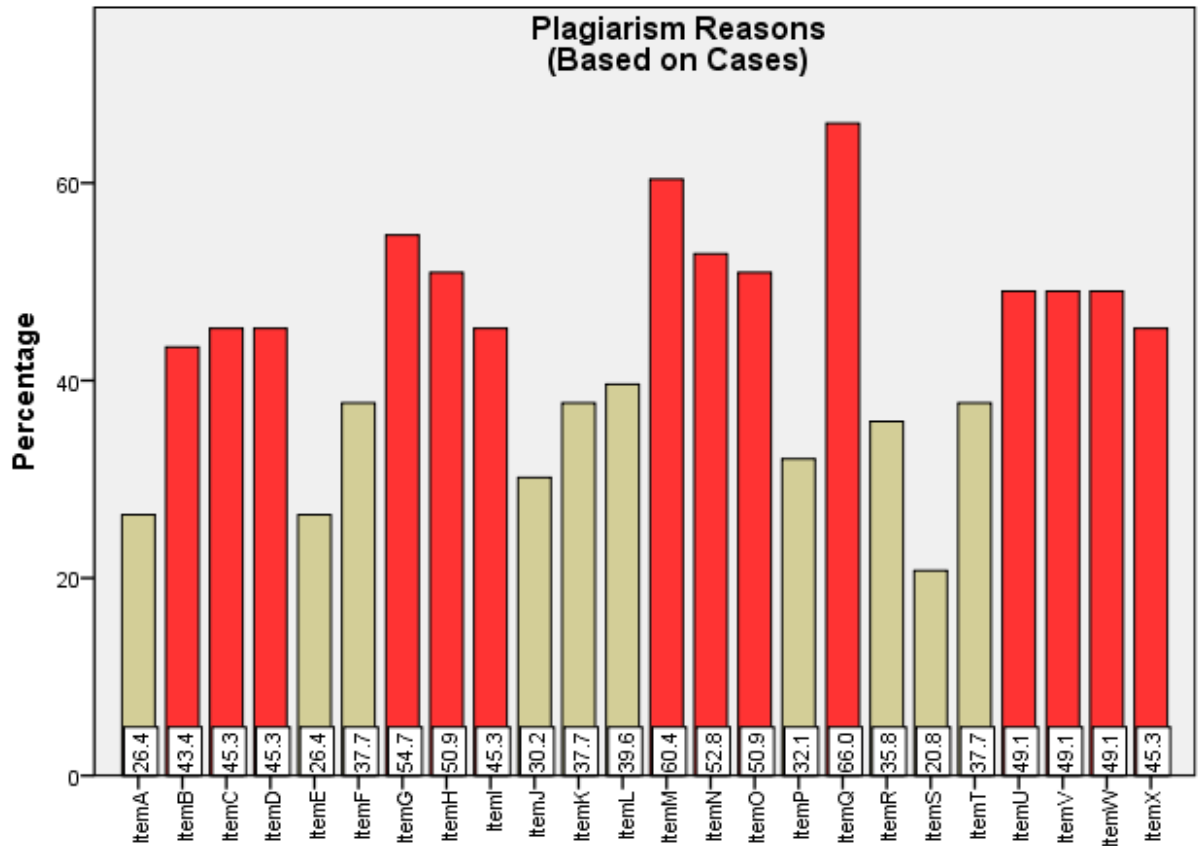
Table 2: Students' Seriousness Mean of Each Plagiarism Type and of Each Incident

Plagiarism Types	Questionnaire Items	Mean of Seriousness of Each Incident	Mean of Seriousness in Each Plagiarism Type
Global Plagiarism	1	1.66	1.65
	2	1.64	

Paraphrasing Plagiarism	3	1.70	1.24
	4	1.26	
	5	0.74	
	6	0.98	
	7	1.53	
Verbatim Plagiarism	8	1.83	1.55
	9	1.26	
Mosaic Plagiarism	10	1.15	1.24
	11	1.32	
Incorrect Citation	12	0.45	0.86
	13	1.02	
	14	1.11	
Self- plagiarism	15	0.98	1.06
	16	1.00	
	17	1.19	

Mean Seriousness, in Table 2, indicates the extent of seriousness of each plagiarism type based on the participants' perceptions estimated by SPSS. Thus, some types of plagiarism are relatively considered as more serious than others in the aforementioned table. In other words, students generally believed that *Global Plagiarism* (i.e., 1.65) is slightly more serious than *Verbatim Plagiarism* (i.e., 1.55) which is also considered to be slightly more serious than the equal proportions of each *Paraphrasing Plagiarism* and *Mosaic Plagiarism* (i.e., 1.24 each), whilst *Incorrect Citation Plagiarism* (i.e., 0.86) was regarded the least serious one. Therefore, the answer to the fourth research question is 'yes, students view some types of plagiarism as more serious than others' based on their responses to the reasons of plagiarism. Although, there are differences among most of the types of plagiarism, as shown in Table 2, the learners mainly consider most of the types of plagiarism as 'Not Plagiarism' or almost 'Moderate Plagiarism' which are not aligned with the various seriousness levels of this study literature review⁵.

In response to the fifth research question (*What are the students' most common reasons for plagiarism?*), the second part of the questionnaire was investigated (See Appendix 5, for the questionnaire items in section B) and the participants' reasons were calculated in percentage by PSS as revealed in Figure 2 (See Appendix 6, for the descriptive analysis of the students' reasons for plagiarism).



Note: percentages do not add up to 100% because it was a multiple answer question.

Figure 2: Cases Percentage of Students' Plagiarism Reasons

Reliant upon the data shown in Figure 2, the participants' highly considered reasons of plagiarism were highlighted and then regarded as the 14 most common reasons of students' plagiarism in their undergraduate research projects, ranked from the top down:

1. Poor research skills of students
2. poor citation practice of students
3. poor students' knowledge of what constitutes plagiarism or academic integrity
4. poor research supervision and guidance by teachers
5. limited sources available for doing research
6. students' problems of (academic) writing skill in English language
7. easy 'copy-pasting' from the Internet by students
8. starting to write too late and running out of time soon
9. Students do not think it is wrong to plagiarise.
10. University teachers do not focus on the originality rate in students' writing assignments.
11. University teachers do not check plagiarism in the research projects.
12. readiness of others to help students in writing research projects, e.g. photocopy shops, offices, ghost writing services, cheat sites, etc.
13. Students do not need to learn how to write a research paper, just want to pass this module.

14. Students have not been appropriately punished (such as, expelled, suspended, etc.)

5. Conclusions

Based on the present study results and findings, it has been concluded that there is inconsistency in the similarity index percentage of the undergraduate research projects due to two reasons, namely: instructors' lack of focus on the originality percentage in the students' written assignments, as well as lack of checking plagiarism in the students' research projects. Furthermore, four types of plagiarism were found in the students' undergraduate research projects including *paraphrasing plagiarism*, *verbatim plagiarism*, *mosaic plagiarism*, and *incorrect citation*. Moreover, *verbatim plagiarism* was the most common type of plagiarism among the four mentioned types. This may be due to the factor that verbatim plagiarism is the easiest type as it can be committed by simply copying and pasting text verbatim from online sources.

Reliant upon the participants' perceptions of plagiarism seriousness level, the six types were considered 'Not Plagiarism' or nearly 'Moderate Plagiarism' which do not come in accordance with the seriousness levels of the study literature review where 'Moderate Plagiarism', 'Serious Plagiarism' and 'Severe Plagiarism' were employed.

The most common reasons of plagiarism, ranked from the top down, were perceived as *students' poor research skills; their poor citation practice; their poor knowledge about academic integrity; poor research supervision and guidance by instructors; limited sources available for conducting research; students' problems of (academic) writing skill in English language; easy copy-pasting from the Internet by students; lack of time management skills; not feeling guilty about acts of plagiarism; instructors' lack of focus on the originality percentage in students' writing assignment; the lack of checking plagiarism in undergraduate research projects; readiness of others to assist students in writing research projects; students' do not think writing research projects serves their future career; and they have not been appropriately disciplined for committing plagiarism acts.*

6. Recommendations

To prevent plagiarism, instructors should assist university learners in understanding what generates plagiarism and how to use information ethically. In other words, university teaching staff need to inform students of the university policies on plagiarism through explicitly explaining plagiarism, its permitted similarity percentage, what the originality report should consist of, and its consequences in the course syllabus.

Besides, teachers should encourage students to study and master the **reading comprehension skills** in order to understand the information presented in the sources at hand so that they can easily integrate the cited information into their own ideas or knowledge.

Furthermore, instructors should make students practice various techniques and solutions to avoid committing plagiarism acts including, **information literacy**, **critical thinking skills**, **accurate citations** in classroom and self-paced courses. In other words, university students need to be well-trained in information literacy issues through practically utilizing various citation techniques such as *how to search for information*, *how to evaluate such information*, and *how to use it ethically* with accurate citations and consistent documentation styles in research. Eventually, students could be deterred from resorting to paraphrasing plagiarism and incorrect citation.

In addition, instructors should also help students practice how to come up with new ideas and also how to make significant contributions to knowledge in research after

having found relevant information from sources. This could be achieved via practicing **critical thinking skills** in writing and research because citing information requires more critical thinking skills than just combining information from different sources into one prepared paper. As a result, students could be prevented from verbatim plagiarism and mosaic plagiarism.

University teachers should also utilize students' samples of plagiarism types (shown in Appendix 1) for classroom practice so that students can recognize the incidents of plagiarism and remedy each plagiarism type in the classroom.

Likewise, university should have an online database for students' written assignments and research into which a plagiarism-checking tool must be integrated so that each student can submit his or her own work through a plagiarism-checker into the online system. Thus, students will be sure that their work is going to be saved in the online database, and checked for plagiarism incidents and amount not only on the Internet, but also in the local database. Consequently, global plagiarism and self-plagiarism could also be avoided.

Though the Turnitin programme greatly supports plagiarism detection, human intervention is essentially required to pinpoint both the incorrect citation practice and machine-paraphrased plagiarism.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

The Two Scorers' Reliability for each Type of Plagiarism based on Intraclass Correlation Coefficient

	Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (Based on Average Measures)		
Plagiarism Types	Intraclass Correlation ^b	95% Confidence Interval	
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Paraphrasing Plagiarism	0.891^c	0.770	0.949
Verbatim Plagiarism	0.939^c	0.857	0.973
Mosaic Plagiarism	0.851^c	0.683	0.930
Incorrect Citation	0.933^c	0.857	0.969

Two-way mixed effects model where people effects are random and measures effects are fixed.

b. Type A intraclass correlation coefficients using an absolute agreement definition.

c. This estimate is computed assuming the interaction effect is absent, because it is not estimable otherwise.

Appendix 2

Snapshots of Plagiarism Types in Students' Undergraduate Research Projects

2.4.3 Allowing Students to Watch on Individual Screens Can Aid Learning

If students are viewing an instructional video for details and you feel the video is good at describing stuff without your feedback, consider encouraging them to watch it on their own screens. This may be part of a flipped classroom where students watch the video at home or in class with headphones on their own device. Each student will watch the video at their own tempo, pausing it as necessary and scrubbing forwards or backwards to the sections they want to hear again. They would be able to monitor the flow of information and take notes or full tasks without losing any information. It also allows you to have one-on-one interactions with students.

Paraphrasi
na

1. Silent Consonants

Although this is a surprisingly widespread phenomenon in English (Silent Consonants), spelling mistakes resulting from it seem quite rare – indeed pronunciation errors, such as pronouncing both “b”s in *bombing*, seem more likely.

Common spelling mistakes involving silent consonants include **caracter*, **enviroment* and **wether*, which respectively lack “h”, “n” and “h” again.

2. Spelling of another Word

There are various ways in which a spelling mistake can be caused by the spelling of another word, which deals with words that are not spelt as one would expect when one is familiar with words of very similar meaning and spelling.

Verbatim
Plagiarism

English is the most commonly spoken language in the world. Nowadays, people around the world, realize the importance of English and they try to learn it for many purposes, such as communicating with new people, to get a deeper understanding of another culture. It even has health benefits, as studies have shown that people who speak two or more languages have more active minds later in life. Since most of the learners of English are now living in the places where English is learnt as a second or foreign language, English as foreign Language (EFL) classes can help school-age children and adults learn English listening, reading and writing skills; these classes can also help them develop speaking skills.

Mosaic
Plagiaris

2.1.7 Photo Montage

Photo montages or slideshows combine photos with music and voiceover to tell a story and usually conjure up deep emotions. These are great to recap events, especially milestones like anniversaries, weddings, and birthdays. (Hausmann R.) talked about that topic.

Incorrect
Citation

Appendix 3

The Frequency of Plagiarism Types in Students' Undergraduate Research Projects

Research Project	Frequency of Plagiarism in Each Type						Total Rate of Plagiarism in Each Project ⁶
	Global Plagiarism	Paraphrasing Plagiarism	Verbatim Plagiarism	Mosaic Plagiarism	Incorrect citation	Self-plagiarism	
1	0	10	35	4	31	0	80
2	0	38	42	12	14	0	106
3	0	10	23	9	17	0	59
4	0	23	44	8	19	0	94
5	0	30	1	5	7	0	43
6	0	26	47	7	30	0	110
7	0	18	66	15	23	0	122
8	0	14	49	1	34	0	98
9	0	7	38	5	14	0	64
10	0	2	10	1	10	0	23
11	0	23	4	6	5	0	38
12	0	5	18	13	26	0	62
13	0	13	1	4	11	0	29
14	0	5	6	9	15	0	35
15	0	35	13	9	10	0	67
16	0	18	4	4	5	0	31
17	0	9	4	10	16	0	39
18	0	9	19	5	23	0	56
19	0	3	40	4	16	0	63
20	0	2	31	3	13	0	49
21	0	2	24	4	39	0	69
22	0	1	30	1	37	0	69
23	0	4	19	5	24	0	52
24	0	13	2	2	17	0	34
25	0	2	27	3	9	0	41
26	0	7	10	6	38	0	61
27	0	9	25	9	32	0	75
28	0	12	21	1	23	0	57
29	0	3	27	2	17	0	49
Total Rate of Plagiarism in Each Type	0	353	680	167	575	0	

Appendix 4

The Descriptive Analysis of Learners' Results of Plagiarism Seriousness in the Questionnaire

Plagiarism Types	Questionnaire Items	Seriousness of Each Incident								Seriousness of Each Plagiarism Type							
		Not plagiarism		Moderate Plagiarism		Serious Plagiarism		Severe Plagiarism		Not plagiarism		Moderate Plagiarism		Serious Plagiarism		Severe Plagiarism	
		Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%
Global Plagiarism	1	9	17	10	18.9	24	45.3	10	18.9	8.5	16.1	11	20.75	24	45.3	9.5	17.95
	2	8	15.2	12	22.6	24	45.3	9	17								
Paraphrasing Plagiarism	3	5	9.4	16	30.2	22	41.5	10	18.9	13.6	25.66	19	35.86	14.4	27.16	6	11.34
	4	12	22.6	22	41.5	12	22.6	7	13.2								
	5	26	49.1	18	34	6	11.3	3	5.7								
	6	15	28.3	26	49.1	10	18.9	2	3.8								
	7	10	18.9	13	24.5	22	41.5	8	15.1								
Verbatim Plagiarism	8	7	13.2	9	17	23	43.4	14	26.4	11.5	21.7	13	24.55	16.5	31.15	12	22.65
	9	16	30.2	17	32.1	10	18.9	10	18.9								
Mosaic Plagiarism	10	14	26.4	24	45.3	8	15.1	7	13.2	11	20.75	24.5	46.25	11.5	21.7	6	11.3
	11	8	15.1	25	47.2	15	28.3	5	9.4								
Incorrect citation	12	35	66	12	22.6	6	11.3	0	0	24.3	45.9	16	30.2	8.3	15.7	4.3	8.2
	13	21	39.6	17	32.1	8	15.1	7	13.2								
	14	17	32.1	19	35.8	11	20.8	6	11.3								
Self-plagiarism	15	21	39.6	17	32.1	10	18.9	5	9.4	20.7	39	15.3	28.9	10.3	19.5	6.7	12.6
	16	21	39.6	17	32.1	9	17	6	11.3								
	17	20	37.7	12	22.6	12	22.6	9	17								

Appendix 5

Students' Questionnaire about Plagiarism Seriousness and Reasons for Plagiarism

Hello, Senior Students!

This questionnaire is about plagiarism. It is for a study to indicate the fourth-year students' understanding of and reasons for plagiarism in their final-year research projects. Your assistance is highly considered to respond to the present questionnaire items.

Note: your responses will be confidential, and used only for this research.

Section A: Plagiarism Seriousness

Please rate the following based on your understanding of plagiarism as 'Not plagiarism'(1), 'Moderate plagiarism'(2), 'Serious plagiarism'(3), or 'Severe plagiarism'(4):

- Submitting another author's research paper as your own work
a. Not plagiarism b. Moderate plagiarism c. Serious plagiarism d. Severe plagiarism
- Buying a research paper from another person or from online to submit as your own work

- a. Not plagiarism b. Moderate plagiarism c. Serious plagiarism d. Severe plagiarism
3. paraphrasing another author's text or ideas without citing the author
a. Not plagiarism b. Moderate plagiarism c. Serious plagiarism d. Severe plagiarism
4. Making some changes in grammar or word choice of a paragraph without citing the source
a. Not plagiarism b. Moderate plagiarism c. Serious plagiarism d. Severe plagiarism
5. Making some changes in grammar or word choice of a paragraph and citing it using quotation marks
a. Not plagiarism b. Moderate plagiarism c. Serious plagiarism d. Severe plagiarism
6. Making some changes in grammar or word choice of a paragraph and citing it without using quotation marks
a. Not plagiarism b. Moderate plagiarism c. Serious plagiarism d. Severe plagiarism
7. Translating Kurdish or Arabic text from a source for your research paper without citing the author
a. Not plagiarism b. Moderate plagiarism c. Serious plagiarism d. Severe plagiarism
8. Directly copying a part of text from an author's work for your research paper without citing the source
a. Not plagiarism b. Moderate plagiarism c. Serious plagiarism d. Severe plagiarism
9. Directly copying a part of a text and mixing it with your own ideas in your research without citing the source
a. Not plagiarism b. Moderate plagiarism c. Serious plagiarism d. Severe plagiarism
10. Using ideas from different sources and putting them together in one paragraph in your research paper without citing the sources
a. Not plagiarism b. Moderate plagiarism c. Serious plagiarism d. Severe plagiarism
11. Copying parts of text from different sources and putting them together in a paragraph in your research without citation
a. Not plagiarism b. Moderate plagiarism c. Serious plagiarism d. Severe plagiarism
12. Mixing the styles of citation, e.g. putting together Harvard style with APA style of referencing in your research paper
a. Not plagiarism b. Moderate plagiarism c. Serious plagiarism d. Severe plagiarism
13. Copying text directly for your research paper without using page number or quotation marks, but citing the source
a. Not plagiarism b. Moderate plagiarism c. Serious plagiarism d. Severe plagiarism
14. Putting citations in a wrong place, such as using intext citation under the cited paragraph, or unorganized sources in the list of references
a. Not plagiarism b. Moderate plagiarism c. Serious plagiarism d. Severe plagiarism
15. Reusing your text of your previous assignment in your research paper without citing your assignment
a. Not plagiarism b. Moderate plagiarism c. Serious plagiarism d. Severe plagiarism
16. Reusing your ideas of your previous assignment in your research paper without citing your assignment

a. Not plagiarism b. Moderate plagiarism c. Serious plagiarism d. Severe plagiarism

17. Re-submitting your previous work/ paper for your undergraduate research project

a. Not plagiarism b. Moderate plagiarism c. Serious plagiarism d. Severe plagiarism

Section B: Students' Reasons for Plagiarism

Please tick as many points as you believe could be the causes of your plagiarism in your undergraduate research project:

- A. Students are never caught plagiarizing at university.
- B. Students have not been appropriately punished (such as, expelled, suspended, etc.)
- C. University teachers do not focus on the originality rate in students' writing assignments.
- D. University teachers do not check plagiarism in the research projects.
- E. easy access to previously submitted research projects at other colleges or universities
- F. students' carelessness about writing undergraduate research projects
- G. poor students' knowledge of what constitutes plagiarism or academic integrity
- H. limited sources available for doing research
- I. readiness of others to help students in writing research projects, e.g. photocopy shops, offices, ghost writing services, cheat sites, etc.
- J. pressure of obtaining higher marks on the undergraduate research projects
- K. fear of failing on the undergraduate research projects
- L. poor citation skills of students
- M. poor citation practice of students
- N. poor research supervision and guidance by teachers
- O. students' problems of (academic) writing skill in English language
- P. poor reading comprehension skills of students
- Q. poor research skills of students
- R. students' heavy workload at university
- S. the pressure of writing to strict word limits
- T. Teachers do not usually care about citing the sources they use in their lectures, such as PowerPoint slides and handouts.
- U. easy 'copy-pasting' from the Internet by students
- V. starting to write too late and running out of time soon
- W. Students do not think it is wrong to plagiarise.
- X. Students do not need to learn how to write a research paper, just want to pass this module.

Appendix 6

The Descriptive Analysis of the Students' Reasons for Plagiarism

The Students' Reasons	Frequencies	Respondent Percentage	Percentage of Cases
students are never caught plagiarizing at university.	14	2.6%	26.4%
students have not been appropriately punished (such as, expelled, suspended, etc.)	23	4.2%	43.4%
University teachers do not focus on the originality in students' writing assignments.	24	4.4%	45.3%

University teachers do not check the plagiarism in our research projects.	24	4.4%	45.3%
Easy access to previously submitted research projects at other colleges or universities	14	2.6%	26.4%
students' carelessness about writing undergraduate research projects	20	3.7%	37.7%
poor students' knowledge of what constitutes plagiarism or academic integrity	29	5.3%	54.7%
Limited sources available for doing research	27	4.9%	50.9%
Readiness of others to help students in writing research projects, e.g. photocopy shops, offices, ghost writing services, cheat sites, etc.	24	4.4%	45.3%
Pressure of obtaining higher marks on the undergraduate research projects	16	2.9%	30.2%
Fear of failing on the undergraduate research projects	20	3.7%	37.7%
Poor citation skills of students	21	3.8%	39.6%
poor citation practice of students	32	5.9%	60.4%
Poor Research supervision and guidance by teachers	28	5.1%	52.8%
Problems of (academic) writing skills in English language	27	4.9%	50.9%
poor reading comprehension skills of students	17	3.1%	32.1%
Poor research skills by students	35	6.4%	66.0%
Students' heavy workload at university	19	3.5%	35.8%
The pressure of writing to strict word limits	11	2.0%	20.8%
Teachers do not usually care about citing the sources they use in their lectures, such as PowerPoint slides and handouts.	20	3.7%	37.7%
Easy 'copy-pasting' from the Internet by students	26	4.8%	49.1%
starting to write too late and running out of time soon	26	4.8%	49.1%
students do not think it is wrong to plagiarise.	26	4.8%	49.1%
students do not need to learn how to write a research paper, just want to pass this module.	24	4.4%	45.3%

* **Corresponding Author:** Dr. Tahsin Hussein, E-Mail: tahsin.rassul@su.edu.krd
Tel: +9647504353954 , **Affiliation:** , Salahaddin University-Erbil -Iraq

Notes

¹ With the exception of four situations where not acknowledging the source of information is not considered plagiarism, including: "presenting historical overviews; presenting one's own experience; repeating ideas credited earlier such as in conclusions; and reporting common knowledge" (Neville, 2007, pp. 19-20).

² Since the data are normally distributed and continuous (not categorical), the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient has been used to find the consistency of inter-rater reliability.

³ The reliability value above 0.8 is considered very good consistency of measuring between two scorers (Shrout & Fleiss, 1979).

⁴ The word count of each research project also reveals that the range is between **1374** and **6003** words which are by far different. The various rates of word count could indicate the deficiency of departmental policies concerning writing senior students' undergraduate research projects.

⁵ If the students' estimated mean of seriousness is around 1, it is considered 'Not Plagiarism'; whereas if their seriousness mean is close to 2, the seriousness rate is regarded as 'Moderate Plagiarism'; and so on. The study literature review considers plagiarism seriousness level of each plagiarism type as 'Moderate Plagiarism', 'Serious Plagiarism', or 'Severe Plagiarism' (Check **Types of Plagiarism 3.1-3.6**, for more details).

⁶ The total frequency of incidents of Plagiarism in each research project is mainly based on Similarity Index percentage of 'Turnitin' program as well as the word count of each research project.

⁷ **Fr** denotes the frequency of variables.