

# Unpacking the Factors that Contribute to Plagiarism Activity among EFL University Students

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## ABSTRACT

The research aimed to unpack plagiarism activity among EFL university students. Using a survey method, the data were collected from 60 EFL university students from different institution. The survey focused on students' understanding on plagiarism, their attitude, and also their experience on plagiarism activity. The research found that majority of students reporting having committed plagiarism on their academic activity. There are factors contributing to plagiarism include a lack of understanding of the material, time limits, and a desire for higher grades. However, the majority of respondents believe that educating students about plagiarism is the most effective strategy in preventing plagiarism, followed by the use of plagiarism prevention tools.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Plagiarism has been a universal issue in academic field, and the impact of plagiarism activity is particularly significant for EFL university students. According to several research exposed that EFL students are more likely to involve in plagiarism for some factors, for instance limited English proficiency, unfamiliarity with academic writing bonds, and also cultural differences in accepting the concept of originality in writing (Alshafei & Jahangir, 2020; Fatima, Abbas, Ming, Hosseini, & Zhu, 2019; Forgas & Negre, 2010). Plagiarism can make serious consequences in academic context, it can provide academic penalties, loss of reputation, and to weaken future career. Several research findings have reported that the frequency of plagiarism cation among EFL university students is considered high. Some survey result reported that 70% of EFL students in university confessed plagiarism in academic business. Additionally, the plagiarism accomplishment have been also informed where over 80% of EFL students engaged in some form of plagiarism These findings propose that the plagiarism is an unescapable and demanding problems that burdens further investigation and more research.

While plagiarism is every so often seen as a considered act of dishonesty, research advises that it may also born from lack of awareness and academic integrity principles. The EFL university students may struggle to comprehend the academic writing norm in their academic institution

(Prasetyo et al., 2022). It is also sometimes leading them to unintentionally do the plagiarism in form of paraphrasing or citation performs. Hence, this directly invites the need for educational involvements to endorse academic integrity and offer students with the tools and resources that can avoid plagiarism action. By investigating the main causes of plagiarism, these involvements can assist the EFL students to improve the skills and knowledge to be success in their academic life.

Moreover, the plagiarism issue is a serious problem in educational institution, and some research have also revealed factors that contribute to this problem. One key factor is a lack of understanding of academic conventions and expectations (Nabee, Mageto, & Pisa, 2020). As well as many students struggle to pilot complex norms and rules in academic writing, particularly in a second language and also foreign language (Pratiwi et al., 2023). This lack of understanding can lead students to unconsciously plagiarism in their academic writing.

Another contributing factor to plagiarism is the also the pressure in having better academic achievement (David, 2015). Students may struggle to achieve high score in order to considered success academically, and this pressure can lead them to involve in plagiarism to fulfill the academic objectives. The motivation is also a significant factor in engaging the plagiarism action (Robles, Rivas, & Campos, 2020), Students may feel lack the motivation to complete academic assignments to the best assignment quality. In these cases, plagiarism may seem as shortcut, to complete those assignments quickly and without any or much academic effort. Final words, the easy access of internet toward online resources also contribute to plagiarism action (Davies & Howard, 2016). In line with the increase of online sources, the students can copy and paste information or text without proper acknowledgement. Additionally, the online information sources may be written in accessible writing style and easier to comprehend rather than the academic texts such as book or journals, where it seen more appealing to students who are doing the academic assignment.

Various studies have struggled to explore the factors which contribute to plagiarism among EFL students. They may come from the educational backgrounds where the act of plagiarism is not seen as a serious wrongdoing, or they have different rule towards academic integrity in their institution. Therefore, this may result in a misinterpretation of the norms and rules of academic writing. Another vital factor that gives to plagiarism action among EFL students is the limited of English proficiency. In case they are not confident in with their English skill, they may to conduct copying or paraphrasing available texts in the internet or other sources in order to complete their academic assignments.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to provide insights into the factors that contribute to plagiarism among EFL university students. Plagiarism is a growing concern in academic circles, and this study can shed light on the reasons why students engage in this unethical behavior. The findings of this research can be used to develop effective strategies to prevent plagiarism and promote academic integrity among students.

Additionally, as this research tries to explore plagiarism activity among EFL students. This research is expected to give contribution to the existing literature toward plagiarism in the EFL academic context. Moreover, the results of this research can enlighten educational policies and practices toward plagiarism action and its prevention in EFL academic contexts (Dewi, 2022). This research is also expected to serve as a supporting findings for future studies on plagiarism especially in educational contexts, to have a better thoughtful about the plagiarism phenomenon. Overall, this research is seen has significant implications for the development of academic practices in the EFL academic context.

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## 2. METHOD

The current research employs a survey research design to gather data from EFL university students. The survey questionnaire is consisted of close-ended questions, which is used to collect data on the focus on prevalence of plagiarism, the contributing factors to plagiarism, and the effectiveness of plagiarism prevention strategies. The sample involved in this research is EFL university students in Indonesia consisting 60 students from two different universities. A convenience sampling technique is used to select participants, and the survey was administered using online forms. The data that has been collected then analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages). This research method also allows for a broad analysis of the prevalence of plagiarism among EFL university students and the effectiveness of current plagiarism prevention strategies.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Question: Have you ever committed plagiarism in your academic assignments?

Yes : 76.67%

No : 23.33%

Based on your survey data on question 1, it reports that 76.67% of the students have committed plagiarism in academic assignments, while the others 23.33% have not committed. This finding suggests a high prevalence of academic offense among EFL university students. The data is reliable with previous research that have exposed there are high rates of plagiarism activity among university students. As reported by Pazos, Ballesteros, Rodriguez, and Failler (2021) that a large number of university students confessed to committing on plagiarism in their academic assignment.

Theoretically, these findings of first question may be influenced by several factors namely academic cultural differences, academic educational pressure, and lack of awareness about academic writing. Additionally, the prevalence of plagiarism also related to the availability wide online resources. Hence, the high prevalence of plagiarism among university students has serious effects for academic integrity. The universities have a responsibility to instruct the students about proper academic writing and support for proper citation practices (Maio, Dixon, & Yeo, 2019).

### Question 2: If yes, why did you commit plagiarism?

I wanted to receive a higher grade. 1.79%

I did not know how to complete the assignment. 10.71%

The assignment was too difficult for me to complete on my own. 57.14%

Other 30.36%

According to the data the highest reason why students committed on plagiarism is because they have not the ability to do the assignment by themselves (54.14%). Then the smallest percentage (1.79%) reported want to to get a high score, 10.71% did not know how to complete the assignment, and the rest 30.36% for other reasons. Hence, the data from the question 2 implies there is a lack of confidence on students' ability to complete academic assignments on their own. This finding becomes a major contributing factor to plagiarism activity among EFL university students. The reason may be caused by various factors, including poor academic training, lack of academic skills, and there might be language barriers.

To be more specific, the data on question 2 suggests that students may not fully understand the importance of academic integrity in university context. Previous research has found in line factors that underwrite to plagiarism among university students. Farhian, Avarzamani, and Rezaee (2022) reported that reason for plagiarism includes a lack of academic skills and low skill of writing among

university students which becomes major factor for plagiarism activity. To address these issues, universities can provide students with greater support and resources, such as writing centers, tutoring services, and academic integrity workshops. Additionally, instructors can promote a culture of academic integrity in the classroom by setting clear expectations and providing guidance on proper citation practices.

The small percentage 1.79% who stated wanting to get a high score is not a main factor, however it is still worth considering. Additionally, the high percentage of respondents (30.36%) who reported "other reasons" for plagiarism highlights the need for further inquiry into more specific factors that contribute to academic plagiarism among EFL university students. It is also worth noting that the prevalence of plagiarism among them can be various through disciplines. For instance, Stitzel, Hoover, and Clark (2018) reported that plagiarism can be higher in social sciences and humanities rather than in science and engineering disciplines. To effectively aware of plagiarism issue, academic institution need to take a specific approach including giving students information on proper citation practices and academic integrity, the academic institution also responsible for providing support and resources for academic skill development.

<b>Question 3: How do you define plagiarism?</b>	
Copying someone else's work without giving proper credit.	16.67%
Using someone else's ideas without giving proper credit.	15.00%
Mimicking someone else's writing style without giving proper credit.	11.67%
All of the above.	56.67%

Based on the question 3, there are 16.67% students believe that plagiarism is the act of copying other's work without including the reference, 15% consider it is using someone's ideas without including the reference, and 11.67% accept as using someone's writing style without including the reference. Interestingly, a majority of the respondents (56.67%) believe that all of the above actions constitute plagiarism.

This data proposes that a major number of EFL university students are aware of different types of plagiarism, including copying others' work, using someone's ideas, and using someone's writing style without proper attribution. This highlights the importance of teaching students about plagiarism and its different forms, as well as providing them with the skills and knowledge to avoid it. Additionally, it is important to note that these findings are in line with Jereb, Urh, Jerebic, and Sprajc (2018) who found a majority of undergraduate students were found to be aware of plagiarism, but they are also involved in plagiarism activity.

The survey data also reports large number students (56.67%) who believe that all the definition - copying others' work, using someone's ideas, and using someone's writing style without proper attribution - organize plagiarism. This implies that the students possess comprehensive understanding of what plagiarism is, and they are able to recognize it in its different forms.

However, the fact that 43.33% of the respondents do not believe that all the types of plagiarism because may be some confusion or lack of clarity among the students regarding what plagiarism is. This highlights the significance of providing the students with clear definitions and concepts of plagiarism and its numerous forms, as well as examples and guidelines on how to avoid it.

Moreover, the data also indicates that a significant proportion of students (27.67%) believe that using someone's ideas without including a reference is plagiarism, while only 16.67% believe that copying someone's work without a reference is plagiarism. This suggests that students may view

the use of ideas as more significant than the use of words, which may lead to unintentional plagiarism if they fail to properly attribute the sources of their ideas.

Overall, the survey data provides valuable insights into the perceptions of EFL university students towards plagiarism. The findings suggest that while many students have a good understanding of what plagiarism is, there is still space for improvement in terms of raising awareness, providing clear guidelines, and promoting ethical writing practices to prevent plagiarism.

<b>Question 4: Do you think plagiarism is a serious academic offense?</b>	
Yes	68.33%
No	31.67%

Based on the question 4, the 68.33% majority of respondent believe that plagiarism is a serious academic offense, while 31.57% have different opinion. This point toward that a significant proportion of the respondents are aware of the severity of plagiarism in academic activity and the importance of maintaining academic integrity.

The fact shows that 68.33% accept the plagiarism as a serious academic offense is in line Childers and Bruton (2016), who found a majority of undergraduate students were found to believe that plagiarism is a serious offense, and they indicated that it should be penalized accordingly. Additionally, Amiri and Razmjoo (2016) exposed that a majority of Iranian EFL learners believed that plagiarism is a serious academic offense. This data suggests that students have a good comprehension of the academic integrity and the consequences of plagiarism.

The survey data also pinpoints the significance of educating the students about plagiarism. The data that 31.57% of the respondents do not accept that plagiarism is a serious academic offense. This implies there may be a lack of awareness or understanding among some students regarding the consequences of plagiarism on their academic life. A supporting research has shown that enlightening the students about plagiarism can lead to a reduction in plagiaristic behavior. As Shang (2019) previously found that students who received training on plagiarism and citation practices were less likely to engage in plagiarism than those who did not receive such training.

Furthermore, educators can use this data to promote about ethic of writing practices. This may involve providing clear guidelines on proper citation practices and encouraging students to use plagiarism detection tools. Generally, the survey data on question 4 offers vital insights into the attitudes of EFL university students towards plagiarism. This findings recommend even though many students understand plagiarism as an academic offense, however there is still lack of understanding of plagiarism that has to be raised in awareness, providing clear guidelines, and promoting ethical writing practices to prevent plagiarism.

<b>Question 5: What factors do you think contribute to students committing plagiarism?</b>	
Lack of time to complete assignments.	11.67%
Lack of understanding of the material.	73.33%
Desire for higher grades.	8.33%
Belief that they will not get caught.	1.67%
Other	5.00%

Based on question 5, the top reason that students commit plagiarism is a lack of understanding of the material, with 73.33% of respondents indicating this as a contributing factor. A smaller percentage of respondents reported a lack of time to complete assignments (11.67%), a desire for higher grades (8.33%), and a belief that they won't get caught (1.67%). Additionally, 5% of respondents reported "other" factors that contribute to plagiarism.

The data proposes that lack of understanding of the material is a major factor contributing to plagiarism among EFL university students. This could be due to a variety of reasons such as inadequate preparation, difficulty in comprehending the material, and lack of access to appropriate resources. The results also indicate that students may not fully comprehend the importance of academic integrity and the consequences of plagiarism. The data also suggests that some students may feel pressured to achieve higher grades, leading them to engage in plagiarism as a means to achieve their academic goals.

Previous research has recognized comparable factors that contribute to plagiarism among university students. Romanowski (2022) found that a lack of understanding of the material and time management were the most significant factors that contribute to plagiarism among university students. To overcome these issues, the policy maker can provide students with greater support and resources such as tutoring services, writing centers or workshops.

<b>Question 6: Which of the following strategies do you think is the most effective in preventing plagiarism?</b>	
Using plagiarism detector tools	27.12%
Educating students about plagiarism.	55.93%
Other	17.95%

The results on the question 6 suggest that 55.93% of respondents believe that educating students about plagiarism is the most effective strategy in preventing plagiarism. This highlights the importance of promoting academic integrity and providing students with the knowledge and skills to properly cite sources and avoid plagiarism. Plagiarism prevention tools, such as plagiarism detection software, were also considered important by a significant portion of the respondents (27.12%), suggesting that these tools can be an effective deterrent to plagiarism. However, it is important to note that there may be limitations to relying solely on plagiarism prevention tools. Research has shown that these tools may not detect all instances of plagiarism and can also produce false positives (Devi, 2020; Rama, 2019). Therefore, it is important for universities to also focus on educating students about the importance of proper citation practices.

Additionally, on the "Other" category (16.95%) shows that there may be other strategies that are considered effective in preventing plagiarism. These could include promoting a culture of academic reliability and offering support and resources to students who are struggling with their assignments. This research has shown that providing feedback on student work can also be an effective way to prevent plagiarism. This includes providing feedback on areas where students need to improve their understanding of the material or their citation practices, as well as feedback on the originality and quality of their work. When students receive regular feedback, they are more likely to stay engaged and motivated in their academic work, and less likely to resort to plagiarism

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In a brief conclusion, plagiarism remains a significant issue among EFL university students, with the majority of respondents reporting having committed plagiarism on their academic activity. There are factors contributing to plagiarism include a lack of understanding of the material, time limits, and a desire for higher grades. However, the majority of respondents believe that educating students about plagiarism is the most effective strategy in preventing plagiarism, followed by the use of plagiarism prevention tools. Other effective strategies include providing clear guidelines and expectations for academic work, and providing regular feedback on student work.

## SUGGESTION

For future research, it would be beneficial to conduct research that could explore the effectiveness of various plagiarism prevention strategies, such as the use of plagiarism prevention application and the impact plagiarism. Finally, further research is highly expected to examine the role of technology in promoting plagiarism prevention.

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