The Craft of Academic Writing: Plagiarism in Research Work at Higher Education

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Abstract
Plagiarism is an academic dishonesty that is frequently practiced in the fields of education, especially at the undergraduate and graduate level. This research study intended to explore the perceptions of teachers and students about their awareness regarding plagiarism, university plagiarism policy, plagiarism practices, causes of plagiarism, the prevalence of plagiarism, the role of Turnitin in reducing plagiarism and other measures to reduce plagiarism. A sample of 60 teachers (38 males, 22 females) and 150 students (65 males and 85 females) was contacted to collect data using a questionnaire. Data was analyzed through item analysis, and for comparisons, a *t-test* was applied. It was also found that plagiarism is a serious problem in universities, and it must be deterred. The fact being reported was that students misappropriate the ideas of someone else and mention them as their work. This malpractice extends to the unauthorized use of online sources and other published material. Several reasons were indicated for scholars' involvement in plagiarism, i.e. considering their assignment as uninteresting, communication gap between scholars and supervisors, supervisors not reporting the plagiarism cases to the relevant bodies, busy schedule of supervisors, and the stress of meeting deadlines, lack of confidence in their abilities, pressure to achieve higher grades, lack of understanding about the task or the subject matter, and poor academic writing skills. There was a difference in perceptions of students and teachers, as students were less aware and less sensitive towards the phenomenon of plagiarism. It was suggested that institutions should conduct seminars and workshops to create awareness among students to avoid plagiarism and policies to curb plagiarism must be implemented strictly.

Keywords: Academic Dishonesty, Plagiarism, Turnitin Software

Introduction
Plagiarism is a prevalent practice of academic dishonesty that can bring disrepute to authors and institutions and damage the integrity of scientific research and publications (Umesh, 2013). It is a form of academic misconduct, taking advantage of someone's academic work and giving the wrong impression of scholarship by showing other persons' academic work and ideas as your own (Morris, 2018) without giving credit and without permission of the original creator . It involves copying written work or stealing ideas and using them illegally as a breach of copyright. Plagiarism is an academic dishonesty that is frequently practiced in the fields of publishing, academics, music and art (Tufescu, 2008) and is considered a serious legal offense and ethical issue in various fields.

The term Plagiarism originated from the Latin word plagiarius, which means robbers (Cook, 2012). It involves not only copying written material but also robbing and stealing ideas (Gasparyan et al., 2017) hence breaching intellectual property rights. Spiller and Crown (1995) explain that plagiarism includes replicating words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs and even entire sections by changing the languages and expressions of others text and submitting the material claiming as their own without recognizing the source. They also assert that even neglecting to refer to the source is still a copyright issue. Plagiarism happens when researchers and writers deliberately use someone's ideas, words, or other data without acknowledgement of its source. Plagiarism is being considered as an intellectual deception and fraud that unacceptable among academicians at any level (Brennan, 2015; Latourette, 2010)

Plagiarism is a violation of copyrights, a grave offence, and an academic deceit (Awan et al., 2021). In the recent era of the knowledge explosion, the practice of plagiarism is observed in information duplication and erroneousness in the representations of others' work in student research reports, theses and journal articles (Wasay & Siddiqui, 2015). According to Onuoha and his colleagues (2013), plagiarism practices are getting greater as data is easily accessible on the Internet, and students misuse the materials and sources. Plagiarism is a contentious issue that is most frequently observed at higher education levels due to multiple reasons. This academic dishonesty is not acceptable whether it is practiced intentionally or unintentionally. It is a clear fact that plagiarism is a common phenomenon that affects all the students at higher education

level. Stealing others' ideas by paraphrasing without referring to the contributors is very common in the research work of university students (Meo & Talha, 2019).

Main aspects of plagiarism involve; direct copying word-for-word without quotation marks or proper citation, paraphrasing without credit and without acknowledging the original source, failing to cite sources correctly when using direct quotes or paraphrased material, being involved in self-plagiarism and reusing previously published work without disclosing, stealing others Ideas and using someone else's research findings without giving them credit and copying art, music, or other creative works without permission and showing them as original. Plagiarism has serious consequences such as academic penalties in the form of suspension, failing grades or expulsion from academic institutions. There are also legal repercussions such as fines, lawsuits, and other legal actions for breaching and violating copyright laws. It also damages a person professionally resulting in job termination, loss of reputation, or disqualification from the organizations. In terms of ethical Implications, one losses credibility, trust, and respect within academic communities.

Plagiarism devalues the creativity and hard work of original creators and authors. It discourages innovation and genuine effort, which are crucial for progress and advancement in any field. Plagiarism has serious consequences, worsening academic standards at higher education levels. Especially in the Pakistani context, due to language barriers and being at an epistemic marginality in knowledge generation, the trend of plagiarism is growing at graduate and post-graduate level. Mansoor et al., (2024) explained the factors such as lack of information skills, conceptual unawareness, and weak policies contributing to unethical research practices among scholars, highlighting the role of libraries in contending plagiarism through anti-plagiarism software such as Turnitin. Wasay and Siddiqui (2015) identified that some of the reasons that lead to plagiarism include deficiency in moral training and responsibility, slack attitudes and behaviors, and deficiencies in communication and academic skills when working in a second language. Plagiarism happens when students practice it, usually for the purpose of achieving better grades and marks. Orim, Borg and Awala-Ale (2013) reported that a lack of skills and awareness leads to plagiarism. Abbasi and his colleagues (2020) have reported multiple factors and reasons for students' indulgence in plagiarism which can be observed in figure 1.

Figure 1
A conceptual model of the causes of plagiarism
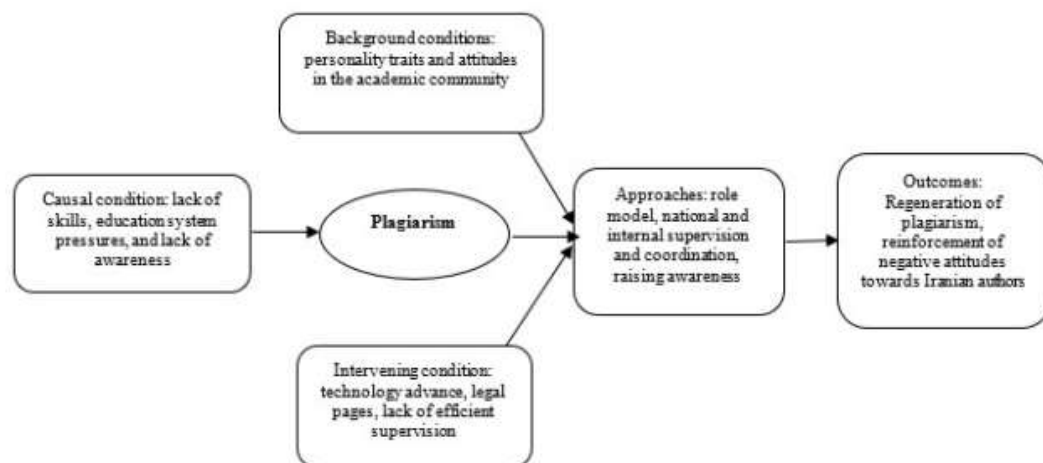
Note. Abbasi, et al., (2020). An elaboration on the causes of plagiarism in Iran: a grounded theory study. Preprint. Research Square.1-23.

Plagiarism in research work is increasing day by day. Plagiarism has become widespread because of the easy availability of big amounts of information on the Internet. Plagiarism is an immoral activity, and the management of several institutions has made many attempts to capture these illegitimate incidents. This situation emphasizes the significance of addressing these issues and gaps through continuous educational training and clear and effective policies to discourage and deter plagiarism (Ismail et al., 2023). Most institutions subscribe to software for plagiarism detection, such as Turnitin. To eradicate these unethical malpractices and to establish high standards of academic integrity, there is a dire need to sensitize teachers and students about the implications and consequences of plagiarism in academic work (Awan et al., 2021). HEC has already taken necessary measures to create awareness of this concern and a mechanism to check plagiarism in Pakistani universities.

Hence, the purpose of this study is to know the perception of students and teachers about plagiarism in assignments and research work at the University of Sargodha. The current study intends to explore the level of teachers' and students' awareness of plagiarism practices in departments of University of Sargodha. The prevalence of plagiarism in research work at the university level requires exploring the causes of plagiarism so that the university administration and faculty may take measures to reduce this academic dishonesty. It intends to know the perception of teachers and students about the effectiveness of Turnitin software for removing plagiarism in higher education institutions.

Methodology
Population and Sample
All the students and teachers from social sciences departments were the population of this study. Therefore, a sample of 60 faculty members and 150 students was selected from the social sciences departments of the University of Sargodha. The

teachers were selected by making a list of teachers from each department and then randomly selected for data collection. Whereas 150 students were selected conveniently for data collection.

Research Instruments

A questionnaire (five-point Likert-type scale) (Sarwar & Shah, 2019) consisted of the items related to the level of teachers' and students' awareness and perceptions about practices of plagiarism, university plagiarism policy, causes of plagiarism, prevalence of plagiarism, role of *Turnitin* software in reducing the plagiarism, and measures to reduce plagiarism at HE level was used after pilot testing. Cronbach's Alpha was measured for the internal consistency of the instrument. Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficients were .866 for the students' questionnaire and .953 for the teachers' questionnaire.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1 *Awareness of scholars about plagiarism*

SR	Statement	Students		Teachers	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	Copying ideas from a source without acknowledgement is plagiarism.	3.13	1.183	4.73	.446
2	Using one's own published work without acknowledgement is plagiarism.	3.17	1.278	4.25	.654
3	Submitting the work of others with one's name is an act of plagiarism.	3.17	1.427	4.10	1.09
4	Copying patent material without the legal permission of the concerned authority is plagiarism.	3.29	1.416	4.43	.563
5	Picking ideas from various sources and organizing them into paragraphs without acknowledgement is an act of plagiarism.	3.34	1.355	4.27	.686
6	Providing incomplete/wrong information about the source so that one cannot trace the source is an act of plagiarism	3.17	1.325	4.45	.852
7	Scholars are familiar with the plagiarism policy of the Pakistan Higher Education Commission (HEC).	3.17	1.838	4.30	.926
8	Scholars know the consequences of plagiarism in research.	3.45	1.162	4.18	.813
9	Plagiarism is considered a serious problem in universities.	3.61	1.140	4.08	.979
10	Plagiarism is discouraged in the university.	3.69	1.204	4.40	.978
11	Supervisors report to higher authorities about the scholars who plagiarize.	3.73	.967	3.18	.725
12	Teachers discuss plagiarism in the classroom	4.23	.761	4.42	.671

Table 1, Figures 2 and 3 show that about 30 % of scholars did not have any awareness about plagiarism, and approximately 20% were ignorant about plagiarism. Scholars reported that teachers do not discuss plagiarism in the classroom. Teachers of different social sciences departments were aware of and knew the consequences of plagiarism, but 69% confessed that supervisors do not report plagiarism cases to higher authorities. This shows that teachers ignore plagiarism cases in their respective departments, and there are no effective activities performed in the social sciences department to avoid plagiarism. Teachers discussed this issue in the classrooms as perceived by the students (M=4.23) and reported by the teachers (M=4.42). The mean values also make it clear that teachers were aware of different forms and modes of plagiarism.

Figure 2. *Awareness of Students about Plagiarism*
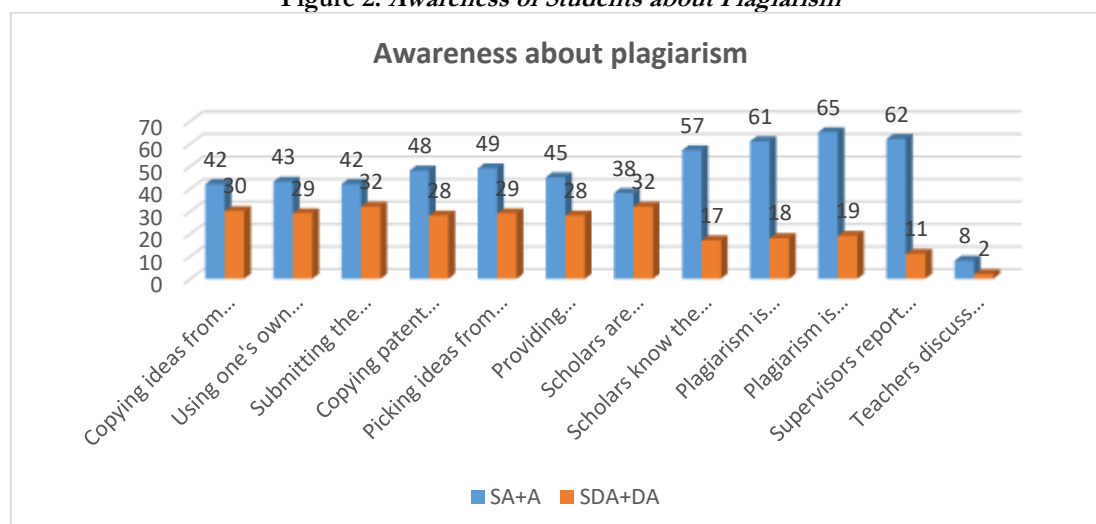
Note. Awareness about plagiarism scores of students at universities are shown combined for strongly agree and agree (SA+A) and strongly disagree and disagree (SDA+DA).
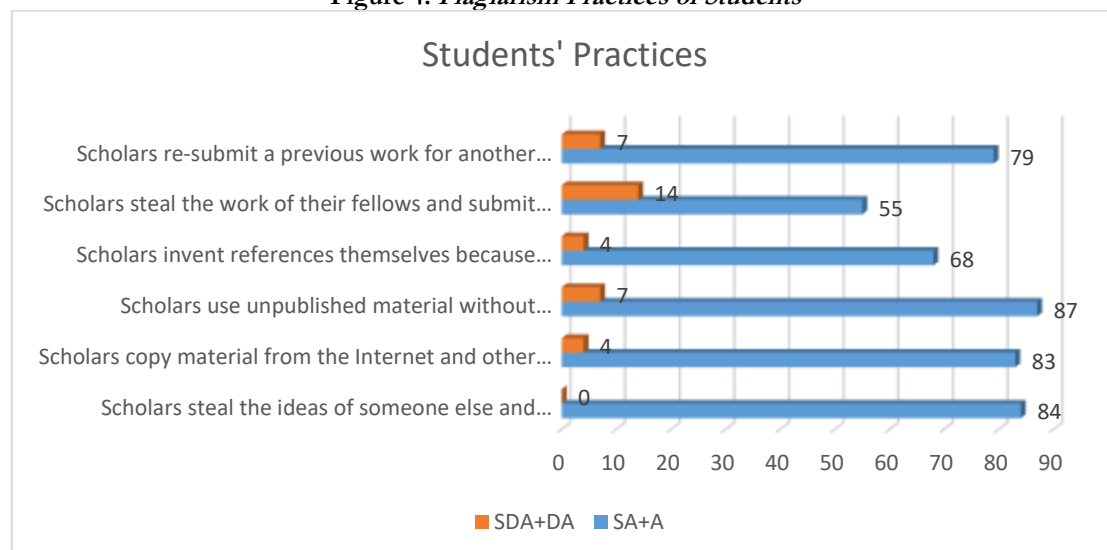
Figure 3. *Awareness of Teachers about Plagiarism*
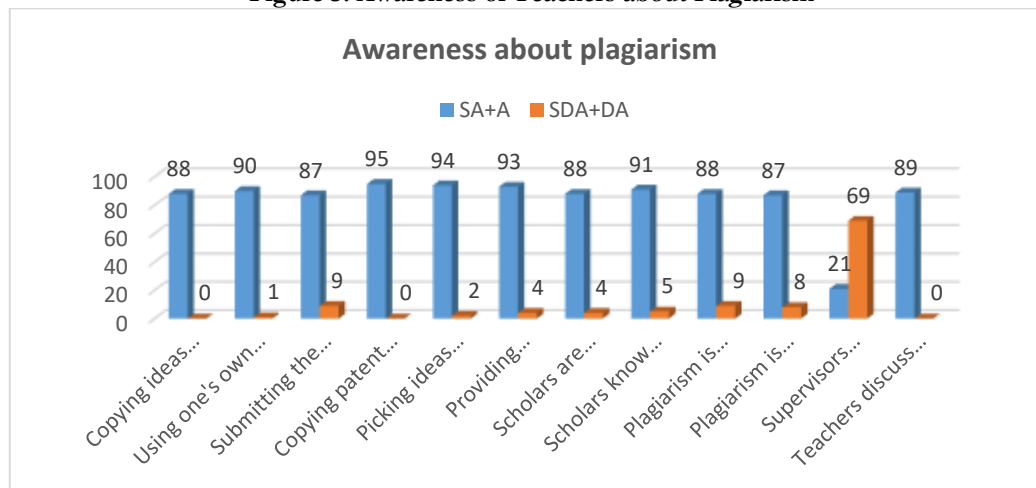
Note. Awareness about plagiarism scores of university faculty are shown are shown combined for strongly agree and agree (SA+A) and strongly disagree and disagree (SDA+DA).
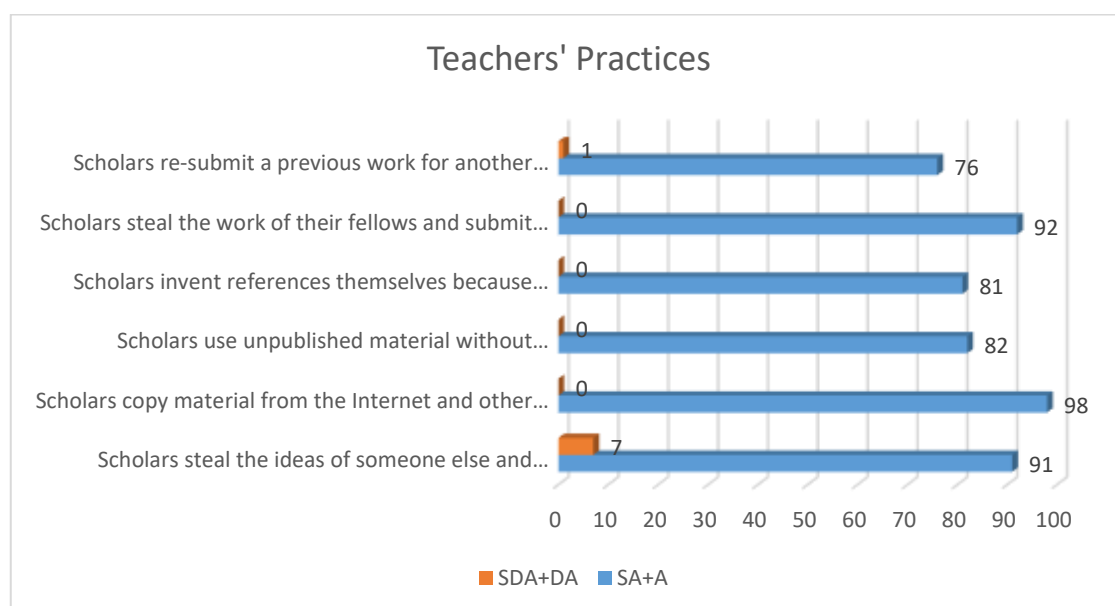
Table 2 *Plagiarism Practices*

SR	Statement	Students Mean	SD	Teachers Mean	SD
1	Scholars / students steal the ideas of someone else and mention them as their own research work	4.14	.645	3.85	.515
2	Scholars / students copy material from the internet and published sources (textbooks, papers) without acknowledgement	4.12	.794	4.05	.287
3	Scholars use unpublished material without acknowledgement or rephrasing.	4.22	.703	4.18	.725
4	Scholars invent references themselves because they have forgotten to note the source details	3.83	.784	3.98	.596
5	Scholars snip the work of their fellows and submit it as their own work	3.55	1.00	4.12	.490
6	Scholars re-submit a previous work for another purpose	3.69	.843	3.87	.623

Table 2, figures 4 and 5 show that most of the students (84%, Mean 3.85, SD = .645) and teachers (91%, Mean 4.15, SD = .515) opined that students steal and snip the ideas of others and mention them as their research work. Both students and teachers expressed that students copy material from online and published sources without acknowledgement or rephrasing. Most of the students (79%) and teachers (76%) said that research scholars re-submit their previous work for other purposes and indulge in self plagiarism. This indicates that students are involved in plagiarism activities to submit their assignments.

Figure 4. *Plagiarism Practices of Students*

Note. Plagiarism practices of students at HE level are shown are shown are shown combined for strongly agree and agree (SA+A) and strongly disagree and disagree (SDA+DA).

Figure 5. *Plagiarism Practices of Teachers*

Note. Plagiarism practices of students as perceived by university faculty are shown combined for strongly agree and agree (SA+A) and strongly disagree and disagree (SDA+DA).
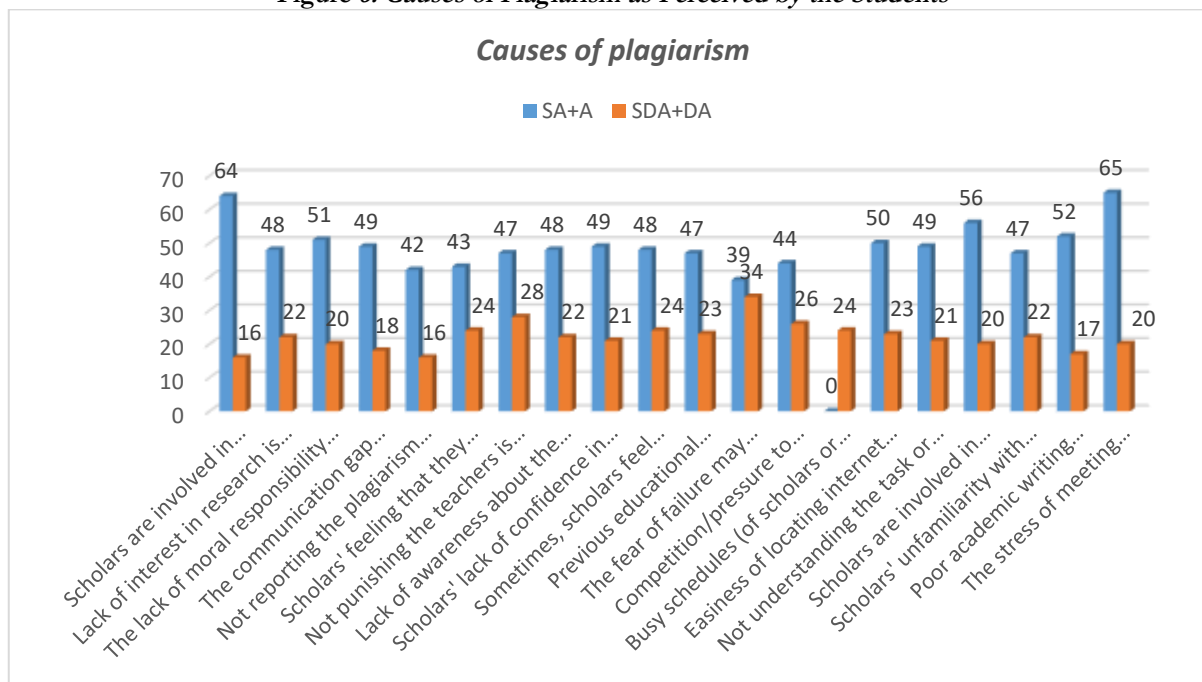
Table 3 *Causes of plagiarism*

SR	Statement	Students		Teachers	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	Scholars plagiarize when they consider the assignments unimportant	3.45	.987	4.10	.986
2	Lack of interest in research is the cause of plagiarism	3.38	1.12	4.08	.720
3	The lack of moral responsibility of scholars results in plagiarism	3.51	1.22	4.28	.739
4	The communication gap between scholars and supervisors is a cause of plagiarism	3.39	1.10	4.13	.596
5	Not reporting the plagiarism by the supervisor is a cause of plagiarism	3.34	1.08	4.17	.693
6	Scholars' understanding that they won't get caught drives them to plagiarism	3.29	1.15	4.18	.537
7	Not punishing the teachers is the cause of plagiarism	3.27	1.32	4.07	.778
8	Students' lack of awareness about the consequences of plagiarism may be the cause of plagiarism.	3.39	1.08	4.02	1.017
9	Students' lack of confidence in their abilities may drive them to get involved in plagiarism.	3.41	1.24	4.38	.904
10	Sometimes, scholars feel convinced to plagiarize because so many other scholars are doing it.	3.29	1.31	4.53	.676
11	Previous educational experience where submitting plagiarized work has been acceptable cause of plagiarism.	3.35	1.21	4.52	.873
12	The fear of failure might convince them to plagiarize.	3.05	1.33	4.07	.821
13	Pressure / competition to achieve higher grades is a cause of plagiarism	3.24	1.25	4.08	.619
14	Busy schedules (of scholars or supervisors) lead to plagiarism.	3.47	1.27	4.20	.684
15	Easiness of locating internet sources is the cause of plagiarism.	3.37	1.21	4.10	1.14
16	Not understanding the task or the subject matter is a cause of plagiarism	3.40	1.21	4.38	.940
17	Scholars are involved in plagiarism because of laziness.	3.47	1.21	4.13	.873
18	Scholars' unfamiliarity with plagiarism is the cause of plagiarism	3.35	1.04	3.85	.971
19	Poor academic writing academic writing skills may be a cause of plagiarism.	3.51	1.5	3.92	.334
20	The stress of meeting deadlines leads to plagiarism	3.63	1.10	4.42	.766

Table 3, figures 5 and 6 show that the majority of the students (64%, Mean = 3.45, SD = .987) and teachers (89%, Mean = 4.10, SD = .986) opined that scholars got involved in plagiarism when they think their assignments unimportant. Most students (51%, Mean = 3.51, SD = 1.23) and teachers (89%, Mean = 4.28, SD = .739) agreed that the lack of moral responsibility of scholars results in plagiarism. A large number of the students (On average 50%) and teachers (On Average 88%) agreed that not reporting plagiarism by the supervisor and hence no punishment is a cause of plagiarism, and scholars feel that they would not get caught, which drives them to do plagiarism. The majority of the students agreed that scholar's lack of confidence in their abilities may drive them to involve in to do plagiarism (49%, Mean=3.41, SD = 1.24), the competition/pressure to achieve

higher grades is a cause of plagiarism (44%, Mean=3.24, SD = 1.25), and busy schedules lead to plagiarism (55%, Mean=3.47, SD = 1.27). The agreement of teachers was much higher in all above mentioned causes. Most of the students and teachers agreed that easy access to internet resources and laziness causes plagiarism. Poor academic writing skills (Students: 52%, Mean=3.51, SD = 1.16 and teachers: 89%, Mean=3.92, SD = .334) and stress of meeting deadlines (Students: 65%, Mean=3.63, SD = 1.10, Teachers: 91%, Mean=4.42, SD = .766) was also considered a major cause of plagiarism.

Figure 6. Causes of Plagiarism as Perceived by the Students

Note. Causes of plagiarism as perceived by the students at HE level are shown combined for strongly agree and agree (SA+A) and strongly disagree and disagree (SDA+DA).
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Figure 7. *Causes of Plagiarism as Perceived by the Teachers*
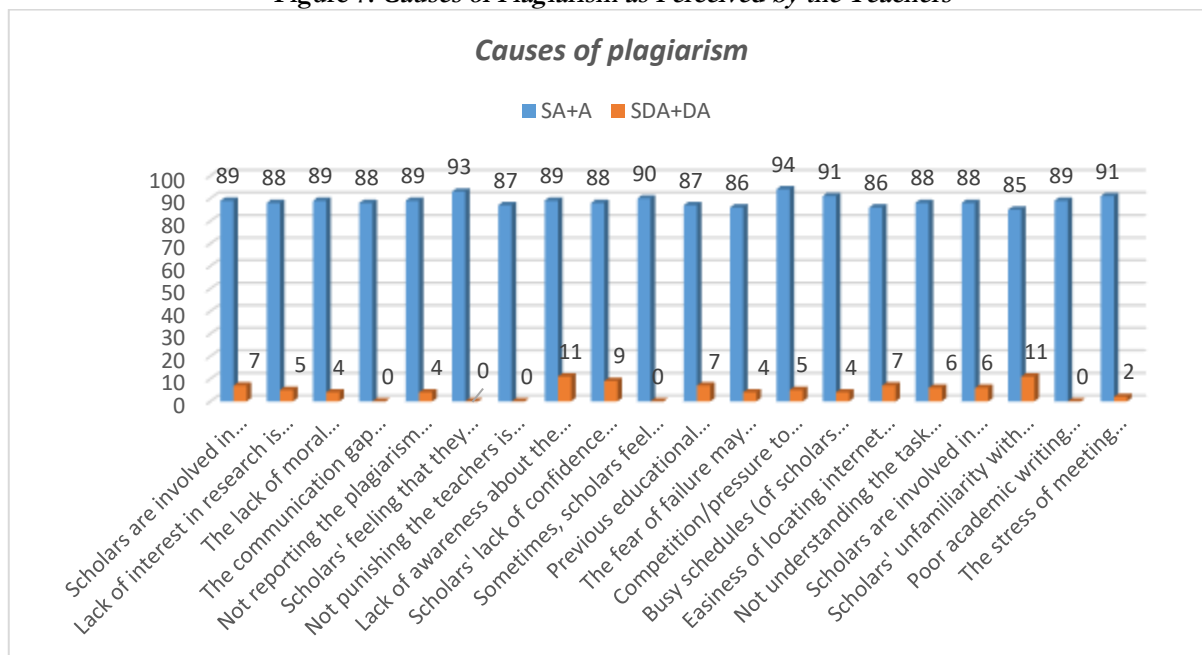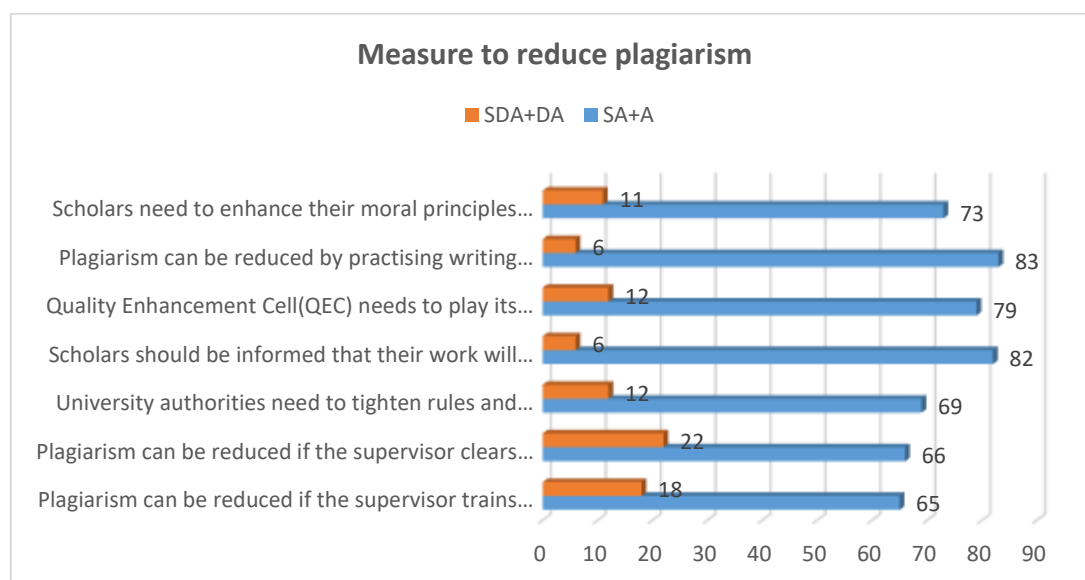

Note. Causes of plagiarism as perceived by the faculty members at HE level are shown combined for strongly agree and agree (SA+A) and strongly disagree and disagree (SDA+DA).

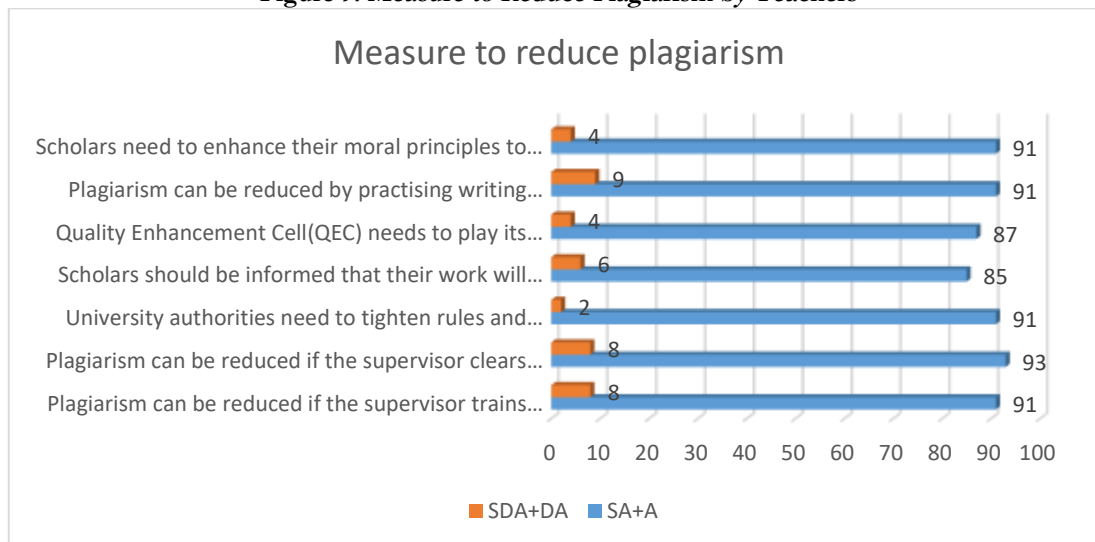<div align="center">Table 4 Measure to Reduce Plagiarism.</div>

SR	Statement	Students		Teachers	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	Plagiarism can be reduced if the supervisor trains his or her scholars about citation and referencing	3.63	1.102	3.82	.651
2	Plagiarism can be reduced if the supervisor clears the concept of students about plagiarism	3.47	1.115	4.20	.879
3	University authorities need to tighten rules and regulations regarding plagiarism	3.55	1.014	4.23	.647
4	Scholars should be intimated that their work will be checked strictly for plagiarism.	3.82	.751	3.95	.746
5	Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC) needs to play its due role in controlling plagiarism	3.74	.870	4.30	.908
6	Plagiarism can be reduced by practicing writing ideas in your own words	3.87	.808	4.15	.840
7	Students need to strengthen moral principles to reduce plagiarism	3.67	.791	4.22	.691

Table 4, figures 8 and 9 make it clear that most of the students (65%, Mean = 3.63, SD = 1.102) and teachers (91%, Mean = 3.82, SD = .651) opined that plagiarism can be minimized if supervisor trained their scholars regarding referencing and citation. The majority of the teachers (93%, Mean = 4.20, SD = .879) and students (65%, Mean = 3.63, SD = 1.102) said that plagiarism could be minimized if the supervisors make clear the concept of students about plagiarism. A large sample of the students (69%, Mean = 3.55, SD = 1.114)) and teachers (91%, Mean = 4.23, SD = .647) opined that universities need to implement tough rules and regulations regarding plagiarism. Moreover, if scholars are informed about the strict checking of their assignments for plagiarism, they would avoid it. Quality Enhancement Cells (QEC) also need to play their due role to control plagiarism.

Most of the students (83%, Mean = 3.87, SD = .808) and teachers (91%, Mean = 4.15, SD = .840) gave the opinion that plagiarism could be reduced by practicing writing ideas by the students in their own words. A large sample of the students (78%, Mean = 3.75, SD = .785) and teachers (83%, Mean = 3.87, SD = .808) opined that scholars need to strengthen their moral principles to reduce plagiarism.

<div align="center">Figure 8. Measure to Reduce Plagiarism by Students</div>

Note. Measure to reduce plagiarism as perceived by students are shown combined for strongly agree and agree (SA+A) and strongly disagree and disagree (SDA+DA).
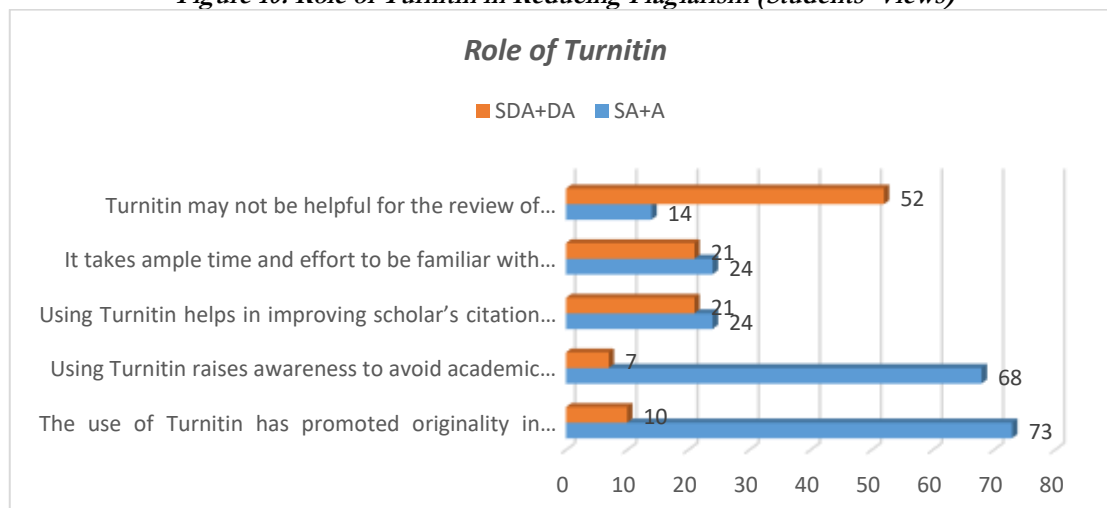
Figure 9. *Measure to Reduce Plagiarism by Teachers*

Note. Measures to Reduce Plagiarism as perceived by faculty members are shown combined for strongly agree and agree (SA+A) and strongly disagree and disagree (SDA+DA).

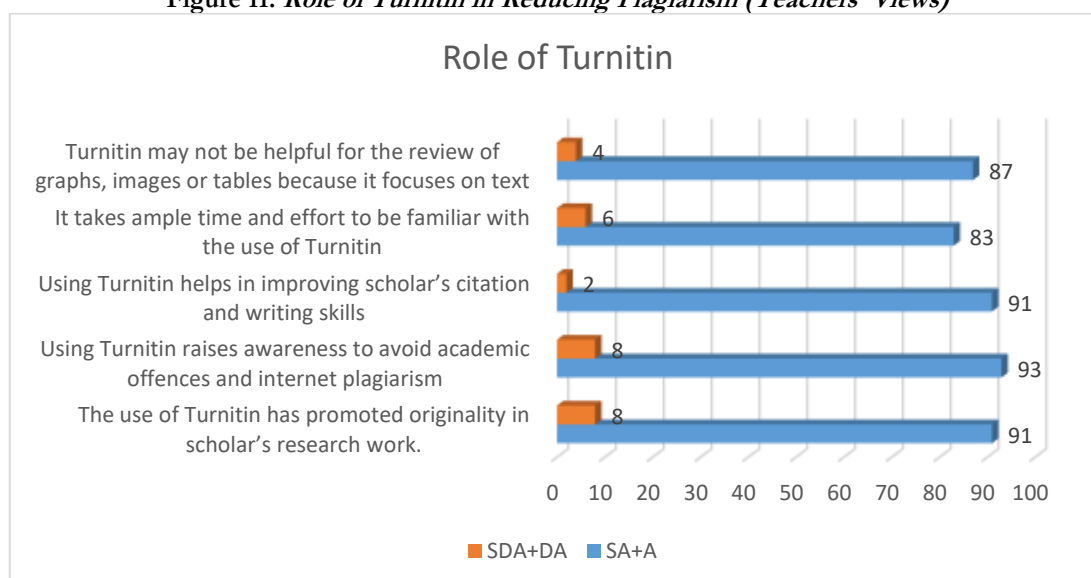**Table 5** *Role of Turnitin in Reducing Plagiarism*

SR	Statement	Students		Teachers	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	The use of Turnitin software has stimulated originality in research work.	3.65	.828	4.13	.892
2	Using Turnitin raises awareness to avoid academic dishonesty	3.63	.807	3.80	.659
3	Using Turnitin helps in improving scholar's writing skills and citations	3.52	.910	4.07	.989
4	It takes ample time and effort to be familiar with the use of Turnitin	3.04	.850	2.30	.850
5	Because Turnitin focuses on text so it may not be helpful for the review of images, graphs or tables	2.62	.857	2.28	.454

Table 5, figure 10 and 11 revealed that most of the students (73%, Mean = 3.65, SD = .828) and teachers (91%, Mean = 4.13, SD = .892) opined that the Turnitin and its use has raised awareness and has promoted originality in research work. A small number of the students (24%, Mean = 3.52, SD = .910) agreed that using Turnitin has helped in developing scholars' academic writing skills as compared to teachers (91%, Mean = 4.07, SD = .989). The same was the case when it came to the time and effort necessary to get familiar with the Turnitin, very few students (24%, Mean = 2.30, SD = .850) and a large number of teachers agreed with the idea (83%, Mean = 3.74, SD = .746). A smaller number of the students (14%, Mean = 2.62, SD = .857) and a big majority of teachers (87%, Mean = 2.28, SD = .454) agreed that Turnitin might not be helpful for reviewing images, graphs or tables because it checks text only. This shows that turning is not very helpful in reducing plagiarism

Figure 10. Role of Turnitin in Reducing Plagiarism (Students' Views)

Note. Role of Turnitin in Reducing Plagiarism as perceived by the students is shown combined for strongly agree and agree (SA+A) and strongly disagree and disagree (SDA+DA).

Figure 11. *Role of Turnitin in Reducing Plagiarism (Teachers' Views)*

Note. Role of Turnitin in Reducing Plagiarism as perceived by the faculty members is shown combined for strongly agree and agree (SA+A) and strongly disagree and disagree (SDA+DA).

Comparison of Students and Teachers' Perception

Table 6 *Comparison of perception of students and teachers about plagiarism*

Variables	Participants	N	Mean	SD	*t*	*P* value
Awareness of plagiarism	Students	150	25.767	5.829		
	Teachers	60	34.05	1.0321	-10.92	.000
Awareness of plagiarism policy	Students	150	6.56	2.31		
	Teachers	60	9.06	.899	-8.09	.000
Plagiarism practices	students	150	17.44	7.91		
	Teachers	60	21.58	1.29	-4.20	.000
Prevalence of plagiarism	Students	150	16.93	9.22		
	Teachers	60	18.83	1.07	-1.58	.002
Causes of plagiarism	Students	150	74.6	20.08		
	Teachers	60	100.90	12.42	-9.43	.130
Measure to reduce plagiarism	Students	150	33.36	8.487		
	Teachers	60	39.35	1.920	-5.405	.000
Role of Turnitin	Students	150	12.72	2.12		
	Teachers	60	12.58	.808	.486	.000

Table 6 indicates the comparison of the perception of students and teachers about plagiarism. There exists a significant difference (*t*= -10.92, *df* = 208, *p*=.000) in the awareness of scholars about plagiarism, (students: *M*=25.76, *SD*=5.82 and teachers *M*=34.05, *SD*=1.03), the awareness of scholars about university plagiarism policy as perceived by students (*M*=6.56, *SD*=2.31) and teachers (*M*=9.06, *SD*=.899) *t*= -8.09, *df* = 208, *p*=.000, and awareness of scholars about practice regarding plagiarism as perceived by students (*M*=17.44, *SD*=7.91) and teachers (*M*=21.58, *SD*=1.29) *t*= -4.20, *df* = 208 and p=.000.
The above table also reflects the comparison of the perception of students and teachers about the prevalence of plagiarism. A significant difference, in the perception of students (*M*=16.93, *SD*=9.22) and teachers (*M*=18.83, *SD*=1.07) *t*= -1.58, *df* = 208, *p*=.002 existed and causes of plagiarism as perceived by students (*M*=74.6, *SD*=20.08) and teachers (*M*=100.90, *SD*=12.42) *t*= -9.43, *df* = 208 and *p*=.130. Table 7 also indicates the comparison of the perception of students and teachers about measures to reduce plagiarism in the perception of students (M=33.36, SD=8.487) and teachers (*M*=39.35, SD=1.920) *t*= -5.405, *df* = 208. p=.000, and the role of Turnitin in reducing plagiarism as perceived by students (*M*=12.72, *SD*=2.12) and teachers (*M*=12.58, *SD*=.808) as *t*= 486, *df* = 208 and *p*=.000, a significant difference was found in the perception of students and teachers. Teachers scored high on all scales related to plagiarism.

Discussion
The study was designed to explore academic dishonesty at higher education level. Perceptions of students and teachers about plagiarism in academic work at the university level were explored. The findings make it clear that scholars steal the ideas of others and mention them as their research work. The teachers and students both expressed that students use to copy online content without acknowledgement. Findings show that although the students were watchful of plagiarism, they were not as sensitive towards plagiarism as their teachers. Students also had less awareness than teachers regarding university plagiarism policy and plagiarism practices. Studies specify that plagiarism is a common form of academic misconduct among researchers and students, ranged from 9.61% to 55.3% (Sagar et al., 2023). The participants of a research conducted by Mtshali (2021) also

had inadequate information about plagiarism and were thinking that listing the sources in the reference list was enough. This academic dishonesty is very much prevalent in the form of paraphrasing without proper citation and referencing and submitting others' work without acknowledging them (Fadlalmola et al., 2022).

It was reported that teachers do not discuss plagiarism in the classroom, and supervisors do not report plagiarism cases to the higher authorities. This shows that teachers generally ignore plagiarism cases, and there is a weak system in place to avoid plagiarism; and hence, there is no punishment. According to Elander and his fellow researchers (2010), to guide students in avoiding plagiarism and explaining plagiarism, the role of the teacher is very important. Teachers must guide the students about plagiarism, types of plagiarism, and how to avoid plagiarism. According to Klein (2011), there is also a chance for students to plagiarize because of the lack of an institution's policy. It has been observed that plagiarism's prevalence is often underestimated. Efforts are being made to develop more robust plagiarism detection systems that can effectively identify various forms of academic misconduct without compromising data confidentiality (Jarić, 2016).

The findings of the study reveal multiple causes that lead researchers towards plagiarism in research. These causes include lack of interest in research, lack of moral responsibility of scholars, scholars understanding that they would not get caught, scholars' lack of confidence in their abilities, competition and pressure to achieve higher grades, busy schedules of scholars and teachers, easy access of internet resources, stress of meeting deadlines, poor academic writing skills and inadequate writing skills among students. These findings are supported by literature (Abbasi et al., 2020; Awan et al., 2021; Bacha & Bahous, 2010; Evering & Moorman, 2012; Mansoor et al., 2024) that disinterest in the subject matter, socio-cultural influences and lack of experience in a particular type of writing is among the major reasons why students do plagiarism. Furthermore, research reveals that while many scholars have sufficient knowledge about plagiarism, a substantial portion still engages in the practice due to peer pressure and influence (Brown & Hammond, 2022).

The respondents suggested that plagiarism may be minimized if supervisors train their scholars regarding referencing and clarify the misconceptions of students about plagiarism. They also asserted that university authorities, especially the Quality Enhancement Cells (QECs), need to tighten rules and regulations regarding plagiarism and that scholars may be informed and intimated about the plagiarism check of their work. It was also suggested that plagiarism could be reduced by continuous practices in academic writing and by enhancing students' moral principles to reduce plagiarism. Abbasi and his colleagues (2020) have recommended interventions such as discouraging cheating attitudes, emphasizing quality over quantity, implementing clear laws and severe punishments, and denouncing intense competition to combat plagiarism effectively. Wasay and Siddiqui (2015) also confirmed that plagiarism is the result of an absence in moral training and the absence of good academic writing skills in second language writing. These findings of Bennett (2017) Coughlin (2015) are confirmatory to many studies that have recommended that institutions should develop academic integrity and academic honesty as a core ethical value for evading plagiarism.

Most of the students and teachers gave the opinion that the use of Turnitin has stimulated and promoted originality in scholars' research work and has raised awareness about the need to avoid plagiarism from online resources. They opined that the use of Turnitin has helped improve scholars' skills in academic writing. A big number of the students expressed that Turnitin is useless for the review of images, graphs or tables because it checks text only. Halgamuge (2017) also found that students fool Turnitin by not using text; instead, they use images and graphs to get a low similarity index. Many researchers have approved the usefulness of Turnitin software as a tool for electronic detection of cheated and copied material in research (Awan et al., 2021; Howard, 2007; Kayaoğlu et al., 2016; Kolhar & Alameen, 2021; Levine & Pazdernik, 2018; Meo & Talha, 2019). Dahl (2007) found that scholars were happy that Turnitin makes plagiarism a lot harder, and the use of Turnitin has made them learn accurate referencing techniques. Halgamuge (2017) thinks that Turnitin may be used as an academic writing tool instead of a punitive instrument.

Conclusion

It was concluded that most of the students and teachers were aware of fundamental aspects of plagiarism. They knew that copying ideas from a source without acknowledgement and using someone's published work without acknowledgement is plagiarism. Despite this awareness, the students and teachers reported a gap in scholars' non familiarity with the plagiarism policy of the Higher Education Commission (HEC). It was also found that plagiarism is a serious problem in universities, and it must be discouraged and deterred. The fact being reported was that students misappropriate the ideas of someone else and mention them as their work. This malpractice extends to the unauthorized use of online sources and other published material. Both types of respondents agreed that students were using published and unpublished material without acknowledgement or rephrasing, and scholars steal and snip the work of others and submit it claiming as their own.

The teachers and students indicated several factors for scholars' involvement in plagiarism, including considering their assignment as unimportant and uninteresting, communication gap between scholars and supervisors, supervisors not reporting the plagiarism cases to the relevant bodies, busy schedule of supervisors, and the stress of meeting deadlines Additionally, scholars often struggle with a lack of confidence in their abilities; competition/pressure to achieve higher grades; lack of understanding about the task or the subject matter; and poor academic writing skills. They believed that to mitigate plagiarism, it is crucial for supervisors and teachers to provide comprehensive training in text citation and referencing techniques. They agreed that university authorities need to implement strict rules and regulations regarding plagiarism. Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC) needs to play an effective role in controlling and reducing instances of plagiarism. By addressing these issues and combating plagiarism, universities can nurture a more ethical academic environment and maintain and uphold the integrity of scholarly work.

Recommendations and Implications

It was recommended that departments conduct seminars and workshops to create awareness among students to avoid plagiarism in academic work. The topics regarding plagiarism awareness and ethical research practices may be integrated into the curriculum across all disciplines. Teachers as supervisors may guide the students about plagiarism and the consequences of plagiarism and HEC plagiarism policy. Supervisors may be trained to effectively mentor students and researchers on ethical research practices in academic writing. They may be encouraged to actively address and report plagiarism cases. Supervisors may utilize plagiarism detection software such as Turnitin to screen student submissions for potential plagiarism and they must educate students and researchers about the use of these tools specially the online tools to check their work before making submission. Universities may establish writing centers that provide support for students to improve their writing skills. Further research may also be conducted to get the perception and viewpoint of heads of departments and university policymakers about the measures to reduce plagiarism.

Universities may nurture a culture of academic integrity, where faculty members and students value and uphold ethical research practices by enhancing understanding and awareness of plagiarism. The efforts of universities to support academic writing and improve supervisory practices will lead to high quality research work and a more demanding academic environment. Which, in turn, will enhance the research output and overall quality of education. Universities that effectively combat plagiarism and maintain and uphold high academic standards will likely see an improvement in their credibility and reputation. This may attract high-quality faculty, staff, students and research grants and opportunities. Educating students, creating awareness about plagiarism and providing them with the necessary help and support to avoid plagiarism will help in their overall development. Consequently, they will become more confident, competent, and ethical researchers and scholars. A strict compliance of plagiarism policies warrants that institutions remain compliant with ethical and legal standards set by the HEC. This may reduce the risk of legal repercussions and uphold the integrity of the institution's certifications and degrees. By addressing the root causes of plagiarism and executing comprehensive solutions, institutions may create a long-term positive impact on the academic environment. Students and researchers will carry the values and ethics of academic integrity into their professional lives, contributing to a more ethical and honest society.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors affirms that they have no conflict of interests.

Ethical Declaration

This research does not involve patients or persons having health related issues and furthermore no other type of threat to participants of this study in terms of their heath, emotions, etc. So, Helsinki declaration and any other type of ethical certificate do not apply to this study.

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