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Understanding the Usage of Anti-Plagiarism Software: Lessons from Malaysian Communities

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Abstract

Academic institutions across the world are tackling the issues of plagiarism and also adopting measures to reduce it. The study aims to visualize the perception of faculty, research scholars, and students from Malaysian universities on using anti-plagiarism software (APS). This study utilized the questionnaire method and highlighted the questions on the views and challenges experienced by the respondents while using the APS. The findings revealed that retraction results from academic misconduct in the writings. The data collected through the questionnaire disclosed that most of the respondents are associated with a Social Science background, and 95.2% are aware of the APS being used. The source is the faculty in most cases.

Keywords:- plagiarism, academic misconduct, retraction, anti-plagiarism software, plagiarism detection software, Malaysian Universities

1. Introduction

Academic misconduct is a significant issue in higher education across the globe. Integrity, sincerity, and honesty are the traits that need to be observed to follow the ethical guidelines in the research. A professional person may find that plagiarism damages their entire career. The direct copying of any paragraph and not quoting has become a thing of recent times, yet many areas should be avoided. Whether intentional or unintentional, plagiarism is an act of using others' ideas without acknowledging the source (Bokosmaty et al., 2019)¹. The occurrences of plagiarism are escalating at higher rates, compelling the entire education system to adapt tools that could curb plagiarism. The available software assists faculty, editors, reviewers, and others in checking the originality of content rather than relying on their capabilities (Isenburg, Oermann, and Howard, 2019)².

Even self-plagiarism in the form of re-use of already submitted/published academic works has attracted massive attention. According to different norms, there are constant changes in the authors' beliefs to curb plagiarism. Depending on the professional status, one may lose the job or reputation or resign from their current position and it will undoubtedly destroy the academic scope and stature. Without citation and context, the legal consequences of plagiarism are dire as there may be cases of criminal offense so as not

to be mistaken. A professional writer must be cautious about academic misconduct (Bretag, 2005³; Idiegbeyan-Ose, Nkiko, and Osinulu, 2016⁴; De Maio, Dixon, & Yeo, 2019⁵).

2. Background Literature

Awasthi and Tripathi (2021)⁶ mentioned in a study that anti-plagiarism software are automated tools to support the research community but they should be used with human intelligence. Mahmoud (2020)⁷ identified the extent of plagiarism and its contributing factors and conducted a two-phase mixed-method study. The first survey was done in 2013 and the second in 2017 to measure the impact of involvement. By Phase II, plagiarism instances per year reduced from 44% to 28%. The faculty was concerned that the engagement decreased by 33% between Phase I and Phase II. Mostafa, Tabassum, and Ahmed (2021)⁸ analyzed the researchers' awareness of plagiarism and the impact of PDS on their measures to avoid plagiarism. The study adopted a structural model that investigated whether the understanding of plagiarism and anti-plagiarism tools has any significant effect on their actions to prevent misconduct. The study found that the level of familiarity with plagiarism and PDS is high among the researchers. Javaeed (2019)⁹ conducted a study to verify medical students' perceptions of plagiarism, the causes of which students engage in plagiarism, the repercussions of plagiarism, and solutions to the problem. Out of 1100 participants, up to 86.91% were not familiar with plagiarism, but 71.18% have engaged in the plagiarism activity before, whereas the efforts to comprehend the level of awareness among Indian scholars about plagiarism and related policies and norms and to encourage its practices among the faculties and students across different disciplines and spaces.

The consequences of plagiarism are far-reaching, and the implications of committing plagiarism can cause a person great harm. Academic dishonesty is seriously detrimental to a professional career. The plagiarised content is retracted from the journal, which specifies that academic misconduct is conducted in published research work.

3. Objectives and Methodology

The study aims to understand the utilization of anti-plagiarism software by the Malaysian community. The perception carried by the students, faculty, and scholars and also the challenges and issues encountered by them are a part of the present study.

An online questionnaire was administered to the professionals, faculty, research scholars, and UG/PG students to understand their viewpoints regarding the plagiarism problem that occurred in the institution and to investigate the current situation and perception of the use of anti-plagiarism software. 42 responses were collected from the respondents through the google form due to the limitation of time to collect the data in the physical field.

4. Retractions: An Indicator of Scientific Misconduct

The retracted articles in the journal are strong evidence to prove the conduct of academic dishonesty in the research work. A fake peer review is the prominent cause of the retraction of an article. According to Retraction Watch (retractionwatch.com) which is a website with a database providing information about

the retracted articles since 2010. As per the database, the retractions were at their peak in 2016 with 77 articles, and the lowest number was 64. With the improvement of the peer review mechanism and the caution to commit academic misconduct, the cases of retractions will gradually be lower. Several reasons were revealed for the causes of retractions through the publications of a retraction announcement in *Biochemical and Biophysical Research Communications* reported that “results were derived from experiments that were found to have flaws in methodological execution and data analysis” due to data fabrication and falsification, manipulation of expression of ideas, salami slicing, and duplicate publication (King and Hu, 1991)¹⁰.

Ajiferuke and Adekannbi (2020)¹¹ studied the features of the corrected and retracted articles between 1996 and 2016 indexed in the Web of Science’s information science and library science subject category. The findings revealed that there were 517 corrections and five retractions in LIS journals during the period. The study also concluded that it takes 587 days to announce the retraction of an article, and few studies received citations even after the retraction. As per the retraction guidelines formulated by the COPE Committee (Retraction guidelines | COPE: Committee on Publication Ethics)¹², a clear indication that the results are unauthentic either as a result of fabrication or falsification of data, a plagiarized content, published by manipulation of the peer review mechanism and the findings have already been published and without acknowledging the source or permission from the publisher. The guidelines also informed about the content for the notices of retraction. The number of retractions escalated after 1997, and the percentage of the retracted papers rose slowly and reduced after 2012 (Brainard, 2018)¹³.

5. Changing Trends of Tools and Techniques to Curb Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a severe issue in academic and research writing. The content and publishing need to be plagiarism-free. While composing the thoughts and writing them is somehow challenging, the support of academic shreds of evidence becomes cumbersome if not done correctly. There are many mechanisms and tools to remove plagiarism from academic content. An efficient tool is vital to identify plagiarism, and copied information removes such components from the entire document (Gururajan and Roberts, 2005¹⁴; Sutherland-Smith, 2010¹⁵; Rezaejad and Rezaei, 2013¹⁶). The scholars and web content creators continuously keep a tab on such things. Using digital tools in paraphrasing to remove plagiarism has also been observed with such devices in the QuillBot AI application. The plagiarism that occurred in the students’ papers hinders the academic progress of their educational institutions and affects their reputations. There are various incidences that keep on compelling to address this issue more precisely. Apart from plagiarism removal and paraphrasing, the plagiarism changer tools are also observed. These tools are helpful in the identification of plagiarism (Coughlin, 2015)¹⁷, and later the copied/plagiarized content can be removed from the document (Hu and Sun, 2017¹⁸; Kumar, Sukula, and Kumar, 2020¹⁹). The inclusion of AI-based algorithms has come forward in these kinds of mechanisms. Academic integrity solely depends upon the intention and mechanisms of scholars adopted in their scholarly material. There are various free tools available to check plagiarism on the internet, the mechanisms and policies to use may vary. It is suggested to use authentic software and tools to scrutinize the work and avoid misconduct or research problems (Sutherland-Smith and Carr, 2005²⁰; Sukula, Gaur, and Babbar, 2015²¹; Singh, 2016²²).

The university policies, national norms, and international parameters are essential for the research scholars to adhere to strict academic writing practices. Few initiatives are taken by the organizations to promote academic integrity and support the research community.

Universities have taken measures and formulated policies and guidelines to promote academic integrity in research work. The roles of the internet, databases and electronic means are comprehensive and vague. The proliferation and access to information in digital fashion provide various mechanisms to use and copy, often to use the information later. The impact on learning and developments has emerged in the shape of plagiarism issues. Tripathi, Dwivedi, and Babbar (2019)²³ studied different initiatives undertaken at the international level to promote academic integrity. The study has included the initiatives from the office of research integrity UK established in 2006, the office of research integrity (ORI), USA, Singapore statement on research integrity, Montreal statement on research integrity in Cross-boundary research collaborations, The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, In Canada, Tri-Agency Research Integrity policy, Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) formulated in 1997, Council of Science Editors, International Centre for Academic Integrity established in 1992, UGC, India has framed Promotion of Academic Integrity and Prevention of Plagiarism in Higher Education Institutions Regulations, 2018. Various countries have faced severe situations in the academic environments and proceedings, where plagiarism has occurred as a global issue.

While formulating an academic integrity policy, involving all interest groups in an institution is essential. The measurements of plagiarism occurrences and students' behaviours have reflected the significant concern towards the mechanisms (Choo and Paull, 2013)²⁴ to create and implement plagiarism-related policies at the university level. Griffith University (2017)²⁵ adopted the institutional framework for promoting integrity among students, and with due permission, the same is adapted from the Lancaster University Framework. The framework has defined the academic misconduct concept and summarized the strategy to prevent and curb plagiarism. The responsibilities of staff and students are outlined in the framework and provide a background for the staff to evaluate the severity of the academic misconduct.

6. Malaysian Universities: A Narrow Perspective

Abusafia et al. (2018)²⁶ conducted a study to investigate the behaviour of Malaysian nursing students towards the involvement in the act of plagiarism. The author revealed that 82.1% and 74.6% of nursing students had been involved in the act of plagiarism or clinical setting, respectively. Academic misconduct in both the clinical setting and educational endeavours is a common issue among the nursing students of Malaysia. Olesen, Amin, and Mahadi (2018)²⁷ reported that misconduct cases such as data fabrication, manipulating the result findings, and plagiarism were observed among junior and senior researchers. Despite the measures adopted to monitor the cases of academic misconduct, it prevails in the research community in Malaysian institutions of higher education. According to Aspura, Noorhidawati, and Abrizah (2018)²⁸, 125 Malaysian publications were retracted, consisting of 33 journal articles and 92 conference papers. The retraction of the articles escalated in 2010 and 2012, with 42 articles (33.6%) and 41 articles (32.8%), respectively, from the 125 retracted articles. Maria and Liliana (2019)²⁹ explored three themes: the definition of concepts, the association between ICT and university teacher plagiarism, and the attitudes and perceptions regarding university teacher plagiarism. The study found that the

concept of university teacher plagiarism does not find a place in the literature, and it's a unique delimitation. The relation between the ICT and university teacher plagiarism is least represented by the studies which require an immediate approach through empirical studies.

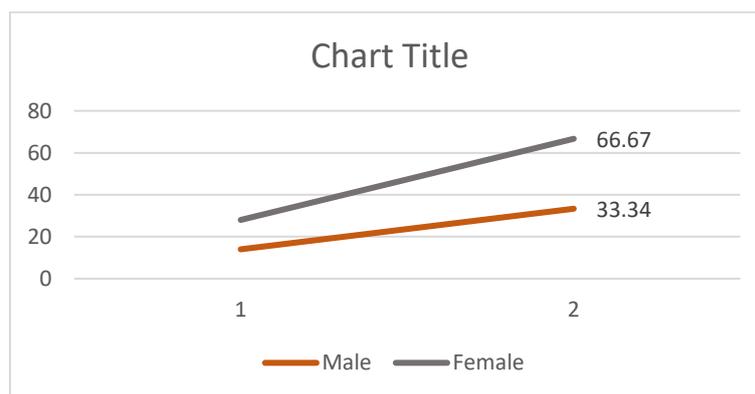
In the light of the above literature, a study has been conducted to comprehend the visualization of Plagiarism Detection Software (PDS) by the academic community in Malaysia. Zain, Rahmat, and Zulkarnain (2021)³⁰ asserted that Malaysian universities treat academic integrity very seriously among their members. A questionnaire has been administered to the professionals, faculty, research scholars, and UG/PG students to measure the level of awareness of the Malaysian communities.

7. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data collected from the Malaysian communities have been tabulated and analyzed to meet the objectives of the present study. The data was brought into the excel form, and sorting was done and represented in different tables and figures, as presented below.

7.1 Gender -wise distribution

Fig 1



According to the data represented in Figure 1, most of the respondents (66.67%) are female, and (33.34%) are male who responded to the questionnaire. The female representation is more impressive than the male.

7.2 Discipline-wise distribution

Fig 2

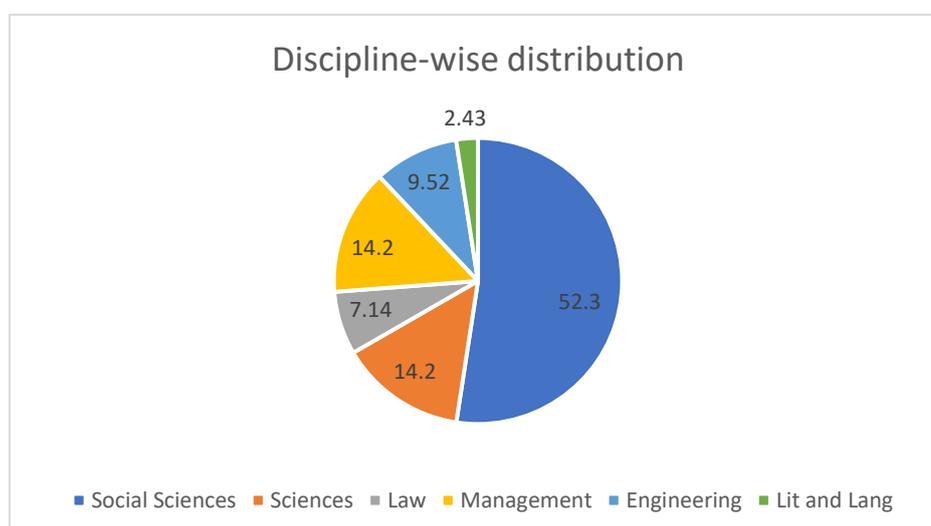
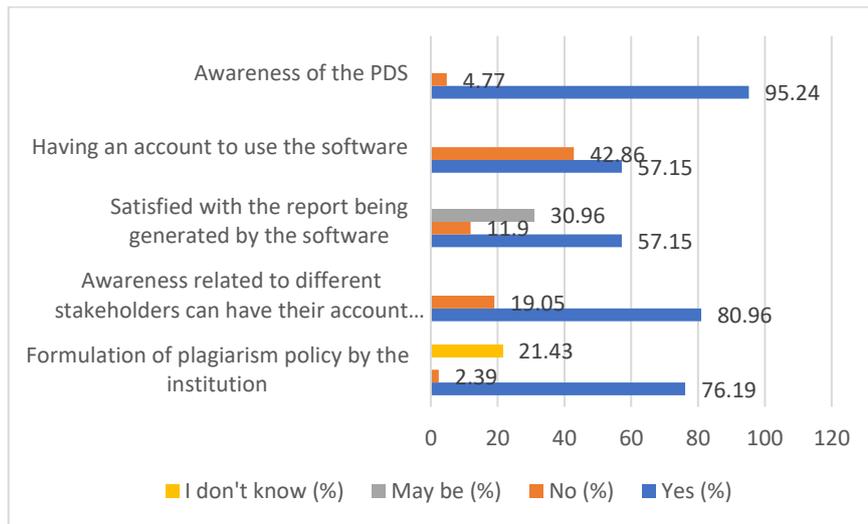


Fig 2 revealed that respondents from various disciplines were part of the study. The majority of the respondents from Social Sciences (52.3%) responded, trailed by Management and Sciences with 14.2%. The respondents from Engineering backgrounds, 9.52% also contributed to the study, Law (7.14%), and 2.43% from Literature and Language disciplines. This indicates that respondents from different disciplines took part and presented their views through the questionnaire.

7.3 Assessment of the views on different aspects related to anti-plagiarism software

Fig 3



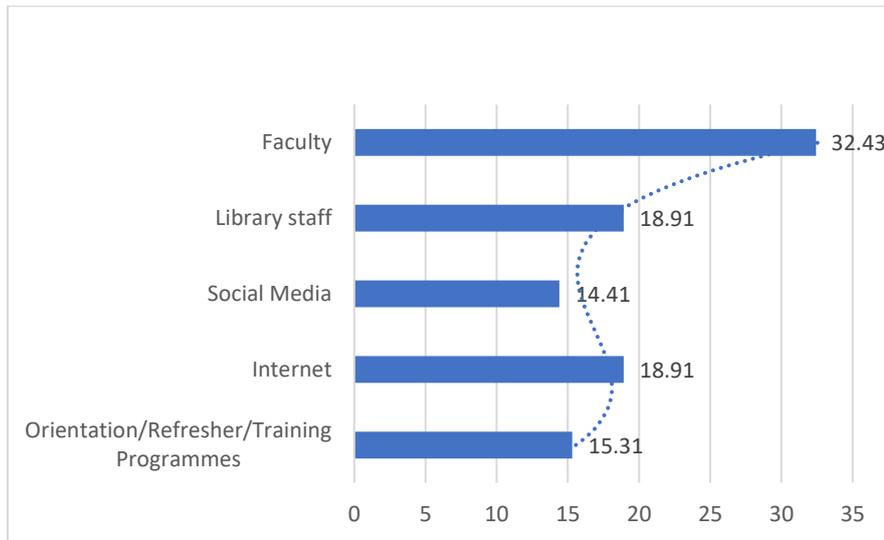
According to the data represented in Figure 3, most respondents (95.24%) are aware of the PDS, and (4.77%) are not. (57.15%) respondents have an account to use the software, and (42.86%) are still not using the software. The report generated by the software satisfies (57.15%) of the respondent, whereas (30.96%) are not satisfied. Many respondents (80.96%) know that stakeholders can have their account in the software, whereas (19.05%) are not. The study sought information from the respondents on whether their institution had formulated any plagiarism policy. The majority of the respondents (76.19%) seconded that their institution had prepared a policy and (2.39%) did not.

7.4 Access to anti-plagiarism software provided by the Universities

The study investigated the access to anti-plagiarism software been provided by the Universities to the member institutions. A majority (95.2%) of the respondents conversed that they have access to Turnitin, whereas (4.76%) shared that they don't know.

7.5 Sources of awareness about plagiarism detection tools

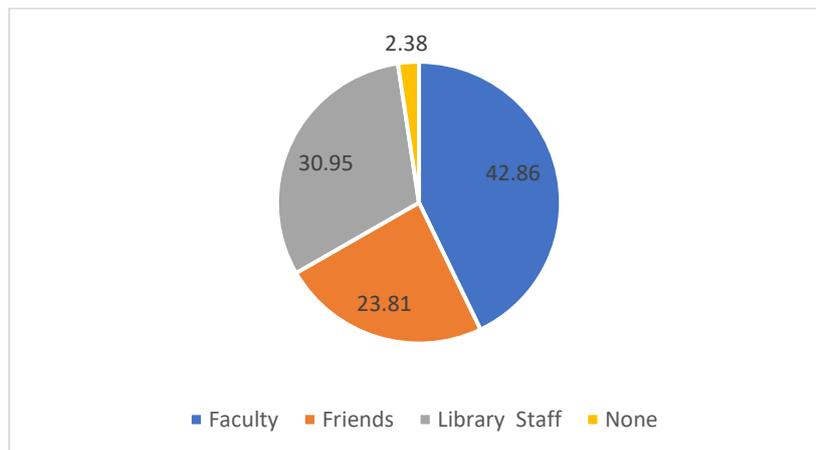
Fig 4



The polynomial trend is ascertained as per the data represented in Fig 4. The above data revealed various sources of awareness about plagiarism detection tools. Many respondents (32.43%) conversed that faculty assisted in developing their knowledge about PDS, followed by library staff and the Internet with (18.91%). The respondents (15.31%) also shared that they updated themselves through Orientation/Refresher/Training Programmes, whereas (14.41%) revealed social media as the main source.

7.6 Assistance sought on the content being deposited in the repository

Fig 5



According to the data represented in Fig 5, a majority (42.86%) of the respondents sought assistance from the faculty when their content got deposited in the repository of the software, followed by library staff with (30.95%) and (23.81%) of respondents shared that they sought assistance from their friends.

Table 1

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
I did utilize anti-plagiarism software to ensure my final work is original before sending it to the lecturer/publisher	2.39	2.39	4.77	19.05	71.43
Rather than establishing a plagiarism policy, the usage of anti-plagiarism software as deterrence against plagiarism is sufficient to minimize the incidents of plagiarism among students and academicians.	4.77	4.77	14.29	23.81	52.39
Anti-plagiarism software may assist students in learning how to record citations and references correctly and build paraphrases to prevent academic plagiarism.	0	0	7.15	28.58	64.29
Anti-plagiarism software is used to discover similarities in writing, and if the work has 60% resemblance to other sources but acknowledges the source, it is not considered plagiarism.	11.9	11.9	19.05	21.43	35.72
Plagiarism has grown in students' work, essays, term papers, and dissertations at Malaysian Universities, due to a lack of anti-plagiarism software.	4.77	11.9	19.05	23.81	40.48
The administration should not have problems handling the anti-plagiarism software when it is associated with a large number of students and staff, and at the same time is connected to many computers and Internet facilities.	0	2.39	11.9	21.43	64.29
Malaysian institutions have considered plagiarism as an academic theft and are taking the good initiative to subscribe to plagiarism detection software.	2.39	0	4.77	21.43	71.43
The strategies of using various software for the detection of plagiarism are effective to combat the issue of plagiarism.	0	2.39	9.53	23.81	64.29

The usage of anti-plagiarism software can increase the awareness of the importance to avoid plagiarism.	0	0	7.15	11.9	80.96
An institutional policy needs to be framed and implemented to curb plagiarism issues.	0	0	2.39	21.43	76.19
A standard plagiarism law from the governmental body should be framed and followed by the academic/research organizations to control plagiarism issues.	0	0	4.77	11.9	83.34

Table 1 represents the opinion of faculty, staff, and research scholars from different Malaysian universities. 71.43% of respondents strongly agreed that they had utilized anti-plagiarism software to ensure their final work is original before sending it to the lecturer/publisher, 19.05% agreed, and 2.39% disagreed. The use of anti-plagiarism software as deterrence against plagiarism is sufficient to minimize the incidents of plagiarism among students and academicians rather than establishing a plagiarism policy. It can increase the awareness of the importance of avoiding plagiarism is strongly seconded by 52.39% and 80.96%, respectively. 64.29% of respondents strongly agreed that anti-plagiarism software might assist students in learning how to record citations and references correctly and build paraphrases to prevent academic plagiarism, whereas 28.58% agreed and 7.15% stood neutral. 35.72% of respondents strongly opined that anti-plagiarism software is used to discover similarities in writing. If the work has 60% resemblance to other sources but acknowledges the source, it is not considered plagiarism, whereas 21.43% agreed. The respondents with 19.05% stood neutral on the same opinion, and 11.9% strongly disagreed with it. Respondents with 40.48% strongly seconded the interpretation that plagiarism has grown in students' work, essays, term papers, and dissertations at Malaysian universities due to a lack of anti-plagiarism software, followed by 19.05% with neutral opinion, 4.77% strongly disagreed with it. The majority of respondents (64.29%) strongly agreed that the administration should not have problems handling the anti-plagiarism software when it is associated with a large number of students and staff and at the same time is connected to many computers and internet facilities, followed by 21.43% agreed, and 2.39% strongly disagreed with the same. 71.43% of respondents strongly viewed that the Malaysian institutions have considered plagiarism as an academic theft and are taking the good initiative to subscribe to plagiarism detection software whereas 4.77% stood neutral and 2.39% strongly disagreed. The strategies of using various software to detect plagiarism and effectively combat the issue of plagiarism are firmly accepted by 64.29%. 9.53% provided a balanced opinion, and 2.39% strongly disagreed. The majority of the respondents (83.34%) and (76.19%) strongly opined that a common plagiarism law from the governmental body should be framed and followed by the academic/research organizations to control plagiarism issues, and an institutional policy needs to be framed and implemented to curb plagiarism issues, respectively as other studies (Javaid, Sultan, and Ehrich, 2020³¹; Merkel, 2021³²; Zain, Rahmat, and Zulkarnain, 2021) also indicate.

8. Conclusion

The study highlighted different views of the faculty, staff, and researchers on using anti-plagiarism software and challenges and issues encountered by Malaysian Universities. The study revealed that most respondents scrutinize their content using Anti-Plagiarism Software, and proper infrastructure is required to handle the software. Malaysian institutions have considered plagiarism as an academic theft and adopted Plagiarism Detection Software to reduce the occurrence of academic misconduct. The study also concluded that the respondents support the implementation of the plagiarism laws formulated by the government, and also, an institutional policy needs to be implemented to minimize the issues of plagiarism. The universities are supposed to implement the national plan of higher academic bodies in the context of higher education and plagiarism issues. The instance of plagiarism surfaces with the detection, and universities come into action. At the intricate level, universities have to formulate policies by incorporating the distinct roles of each academic component, such as scholars and educators.

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