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## Students' knowledge and attitudes towards plagiarism at the Faculty of Engineering Kyambogo University

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## **Introduction and background of the study**

Plagiarism has been an issue in institutions of higher learning since mid-eighteenth century (Khang, Khai & Quoc, 2016). Plagiarism in higher education has been mentioned mostly in public media and through informal social-network anecdotes of gross violations with claims that cheating continues in colleges and universities where students often plagiarized by copying and pasting information from articles on the internet without a single citation acknowledging the authors of those information materials (Apatsa, 2018).

Plagiarism is also considered to be linguistic in nature, since it involves the use of the language used by a particular person in a particular document (Johana & Delai, 2018). It is sometimes as a result of failure to paraphrase, cite and reference work from other authors. This is especially common among students when they copy and paste other people's work without acknowledging them. As such, plagiarism can be evidenced when a researcher uses the same words, paragraphs or language already presented by someone else as his/her own work (Mapule & Lizette, 2017).

Plagiarism is a common worldwide problem and this is usually done by the students during their research study and when doing assignments (Johana & Delai, 2018). The advancement of technology has also made it worse as students download information online and paste it in their work or present it as their own. (Naano & Atanas, 2017). This requires institutions to put much effort in looking for possible strategies to abate plagiarism.

Students in institutions of higher learning can still plagiarise despite the fact that librarians guide them on how to access and use information from different sources (Cahaya & Ari, 2017) and also acknowledge authors of those information materials to be used (Emenalo, 2016). This is not as different in Uganda as students feign ignorance and claim that they do not understand what constitutes plagiarism (Krokosz, 2021).

## **Objectives of the study**

The aim of the study was to investigate students' knowledge and attitudes towards plagiarism at the Faculty of Engineering Kyambogo University and the specific objectives included;

- i. To find out knowledge of students towards plagiarism at Kyambogo University
- ii. To find out the attitude of students towards plagiarism at Kyambogo University
- iii. To find out the factors that foster plagiarism among the students at Kyambogo University
- iv. To suggest strategies to abate plagiarism among students at Kyambogo University

Many students in the institutions of higher learning practice plagiarism during coursework and in the research process (Selemanin, Chawinga & Dube, 2018). It has been opined that this could be due to limited or poor knowledge about academic writing, laziness and struggle to score high grades and what constitutes plagiarism (Hamdoon & Al-Maawali, 2020). At Kyambogo University, students are expected to write course works every semester and reports at the end of the course.

## **Literature Review**

### **Knowledge of students towards plagiarism**

According to Rets & Ilya (2018), copying words from the sources without acknowledging the authors is the kind of knowledge students think plagiarism is all about. Additionally, Dumitrina (2019), stated that students also understand plagiarism inform of changing words with synonym, reversing a sentence to its opposite, either adding or deleting words from the original one without paraphrasing and citing the authors.

With reference to Anney and Mosha (2015), they stated that students also understand plagiarism as putting one's name on someone else work without authorization is definitely a kind of plagiarism. Besides this, buying paper or having another work and claim it as his or her own work can be a plagiarism. In addition, Witherspoon, Maldonado, and Lacey (2010) also added that students know plagiarism as cheating, submitting false data and citing unmatched referenced with material cited.

### **Students' attitudes about Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is believed to be associated with limited knowledge and awareness of factors that foster the act when students are doing research (Hamdoon & Al-Maawali, 2020). Majority of the students in the institutions of higher learning have got limited knowledge of learning how plagiarism is done and how to avoid in their research writings (Rets & Ilya, 2018). This was evidenced in Chinese and Australian universities where students failed to differentiate the act of plagiarism in two or more work presented to them to find out whether their colleagues had copied from each other, only to realize that the majority replied that there is no plagiarism in the work therefore they have got limited understanding of plagiarism related issues (Mapule & Lizette, 2017).

As stated by Vassileva and Chankova (2019), Students in the institutions of higher learning suggest and believe that plagiarism results from limited language skills, writing skills and having limited preventive measures on how to design assignments, proposals and dissertations which is one of the academic requirements for them to achieve a certain level of qualification in education. In addition, Uplaonkar (2018), some students also believe that plagiarism is done when they are given projects that require their unique opinions and thinking capacity in attempting; in that most of them consider copying the work form the internet and guarding as their own created ideas.

According to Nguyen, D. T. T. (2021), students have their own understanding and believe of plagiarism as the act of copying someone's work with all the words used or considering some parts without giving proper citation and it is also understood as using your own published work to help you generate a new publication(s). Students in most of the institutions of higher learning have got the basic understanding of plagiarism when it comes to the complex related issues as per the actin that they always understand plagiarism when one steals the ideas words or pictures from others and they present as their own work (Anaman & Agyei, 2021).

### **Factors that foster plagiarism**

Laziness, lack of confidence, panic, static knowledge as well as the inability to integrate the recommended sources of materials used in the work to be submitted to the supervisors or lecturers, among others can be determined as the highest factors that foster plagiarism among the students in the most institution of higher learning (Emenalo, 2016). Though in the other hand some of the students plagiarise unconsciously and unwillingly when they have got little idea about the possible cause and how plagiarism is done in the most academic writings (Sibomana, Ndayambaje, & Uwambayinema, 2018),

Learning is a gradual process and determined as the academic discourse among the students though some of them are lack familiarity in that due to the fact that it requires the use of foreign language (English) and they normally end up using the words of others when doing their work to be submitted to the lecturers or the supervisors for different awards (Johana & Delai, 2018). Therefore; learning being a gradual process and academic discourse can foster students to plagiarise (Jereb, Lammnein, & Jerebic, 2018).

Working pressure among the students working and at the same time studying in most of the institution of higher learning can end up plagiarising due to the fact that they have limited time

to concentrate and focus on doing different assignments given by the lecturers and the supervisors (Anaman & Agyei, 2021). Students can also be tempted to copy the work from their colleagues and internet with the intention of submitting the work only not knowing that they are plagiarising (Cahaya & Ari, 2017).

Limited time given to the students to conduct research foster plagiarism which is the occurrence of the academic fraud in that they struggle to meet the deadline of doing and submitting their research papers to their supervisors; therefore, ending up copying other people's work and that from internet without acknowledging the sources and the authors. (Darwish & Sadeqi, 2016). Students that normally have unclear perception of plagiarism and having little ideas that the act is quite common among others end also doing so in that they will take it as having minor consequences if they plagiarise (Fish & Hura, 2013).

In most academic institutions of higher learning, majority of students who fail to cite and reference their works to be submitted to the lecturers and the supervisors have got limited knowledge of the importance as to people do so ending up plagiarising (Polona & Dragan, 2017). Some students end up plagiarising due to the fact that they have got limited linguistic mechanics to help in integrating, analysing and interpret different sources of work to be used in their academic writings making them fail to use their own words to compile their work (Sisler, 2014).

Lecturers who normally constrain students by requesting and giving them authority to do and present the work the way they want normally take higher hands in fostering plagiarism among the students (Emenalo, 2016). In relation to the statement, plagiarism can be due to the fact that they do not give encouragement to them to interpret the academic discourses thus ending up doing replication to enable them produce work that is acceptable by the lecturers (Vinod, 2012).

### **Strategies to abate plagiarism**

Use of plagiarism detection software help most researchers, lecturers and students in detecting most instances of unoriginal texts/work, allowing them to quickly identify missing citations, references and parts which need paraphrasing (Hamdoon & Al-Maawali, 2020). Furthermore, lecturers and supervisors can also deter plagiarism by making students aware of plagiarism percentage in the software's report for their work since it points out the level of over-reliance on people's quotes and help them learn how to cite appropriately (Anaman & Agyei, 2021). Software like Turnitin enables lecturers, supervisors and students to detect the level of plagiarism in the work submitted for different awards to be given to students, therefore the software helps deter plagiarism in different academic writings.

Writing skills' development among the students being done in most of the institutions of higher learning has greatly taken part in reducing the level of plagiarism among them because of enhancing them with necessary skills of comprehension, summarizing, paraphrasing, citing and referencing of different works to be submitted for different awards (Vinod, 2012). According to Selemani, Chawinga & Gift (2018), different lecturers and supervisors in different institutions always equip their students with citing and referencing skills when doing assignments and reports to enable fight and abate the level of plagiarism in their work before presenting for marking.

Students are encouraged to design more effective assignments and this is done by intentionally instructing them to design assignments that are challenging or nearly impossible to plagiarize and one way to do this is make framework for the students' research writing process (Uplaonkar, 2018). Apart from designing more effective assignments, students are always encouraged to complete an annotated bibliography, in advance of a rough draft, which eventually leads to the final paper. Scaffolding provides students feedback about their work

and empowers them to succeed, while at the same time reduces pressure that could lead to academic dishonesty (Johana & Delai, 2018).

Educate students about intellectual property rights and this can be done by defining plagiarism and including plagiarism policy on the syllabus to enable discuss intellectual property (Emenalo, 2016). Additionally, communicating consequences for plagiarism both in class, as well as outside class can help students develop respect for intellectual property and also providing them with concrete examples of plagiarism so they better understand the concept (Hamdoon & Al-Maawali, 2020). Educating students about intellectual property rights can encourage them to develop and have respect for the work that is not their own as well as helping them to abate plagiarism in the academic writings.

## Methodology

Quantitative descriptive research study design was used to measure and compare the students' knowledge and attitudes towards plagiarism. The study population was the students of Faculty of Engineering, Kyambogo University. Simple random sampling was used to select 357 from the population at the Faculty of Engineering, Kyambogo University. Questionnaire was used questionnaire to collect data in line with the objectives of the study. The data was analysed using SPSS software to ease presentation.

## Presentation and interpretation of findings

### Response Rate

A total of 357 questionnaires were distributed and all were collected back having been filled completely which indicated the response rate of 100 percent. Therefore, the analysis will be based on them to examine the different objectives of the study as described in the introduction for this chapter.

The table below shows findings on gender of respondents;

**Table 4. 1: Gender of the Respondents**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Males	293	82.07
Females	64	17.93
<b>Total</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>100.00</b>

*Source: Field Findings, 2022*

According to table 4.1, the study had female and male respondents. More so, it was indicated that males were more than females. Findings revealed that out of total sample size respondents, 293 (82.07 %) of the respondents were males while 64 (17.93 %) were females. The gender disparities were so due to the fact that males were much more in engineering compared to females. For further discussion, the table implies that data collected at the Faculty of Engineering are full of males than females due to the fact that the study used simple random sampling technique which doesn't focus on biasness when selecting gender to participate in the study.

Here, the researcher was interested in investigating educational level of respondents. As a matter of fact, education categories of respondents included; post graduate, diploma, Masters and PhD.

**Table 4. 2: Education level of the respondents**

Education level	Frequency	Percentage
Post graduate degree	291	81.51
Diploma	61	17.09
Masters	5	1.40
<b>Total</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>100.00</b>

*Source: Field Findings, 2022*

Majority of respondents represented by table 4.2 shows that 81.51% were at post graduate students. Furthermore, it is indicated that 17.09% of respondents were diploma students, 1.40 % were Masters' students while PhD students were not found in the Faculty of Engineering during the time for data collection. It was essential to examine the education levels of respondents. This was aimed at establishing how one's level of education could influence the understanding of the study variables. It was found out that respondents with postgraduate degree and diploma have a thorough and logical understanding of the topic thus their views were instrumental in the writing of this research report.

### **Empirical Findings on Plagiarism**

The table shows the findings shows students understanding of plagiarism

**Table 4. 3: Understanding of plagiarism**

Do you have some idea about plagiarism?	Frequency	Percentage
No	57	15.69
Yes	301	84.31
<b>Total</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>100.00</b>

*Source: Field Findings, 2022*

When asked whether they had some idea about plagiarism, majority of the respondents (84.31 %) said yes while 15.69 percent had no idea about plagiarism. The discussion as per the table 4.3.1 implies that the greater percentage of the respondents (84.31%) said that they have ideas about plagiarism by responding yes to the question which represents students' views at the Faculty of Engineering, Kyambogo University. This means most of the students have got that idea in relation to plagiarism. With reference to Anney & Mosha (2015), they stated that students also understand plagiarism as putting one's name on someone else work without authorization is definitely a kind of plagiarism. Besides this, buying paper or having another work and claim it as his or her own work can be a plagiarism. In addition, Witherspoon, Maldonado, & Lacey (2010) also added that students know plagiarism as cheating, submitting false data and citing unmatched referenced with material cited.

The respondents were asked whether they had ever plagiarized and the findings are shown in the table below.

**Table 4.4: Student's involvement in plagiarism**

Have you ever plagiarized?	Frequency	Percentage
No	66	18.49
Yes	291	81.51
<b>Total</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Source: Primary Data**

When asked whether they had ever plagiarized, 81.51 percent of the respondents said yes while 18.49 percent of the respondents said no. For further discussion, the majority of students with 81.51% have ever plagiarised at the Faculty of engineering at Kyambogo University due to their response yes to the question asked in the questionnaire about their involvement in the plagiarism. The greater percentage of the respondents said they have ever plagiarise meaning being students, they might be doing some of the work whereby they engage in the act of plagiarism. This is due to their response of yes during the question which inquired them to response whether they have ever plagiarise and majority of them responded with greater percentage of 81.51%.

**Ways of plagiarism**

The respondents were asked how they had plagiarized and the findings are shown in the table below.

**Table: 4.5 Means of plagiarism**

<b>If yes, how did you plagiarize?</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Copying during test and exams	100	34.36
Copying work from internet	80	27.49
Submitting the similar coursework	111	38.15
<b>Total</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Source: Primary Data**

When asked on how they plagiarized, 34.36% said they copied during tests and exams, 38.15% said that they submitted similar course works while 27.49% said they copied work from the internet. The discussion as per the table above shows that majority of students with 38.15% plagiarised through submitting similar coursework given to them by their lecturers at faculty of engineering at Kyambogo University which implies that most of the students plagiarise when given coursework which needs their ideas, and they end up sharing the similar copies with course mates. This means that most of the students plagiarise more during the time when coursework are given since they said they always submit similar coursework and with others doing so during the time when test and exams are done since they also said they plagiarise by copying during test and exams. According to Uplaonkar (2018), some students also believe that plagiarism is done when they are given projects that require their unique opinions and thinking capacity in attempting; in that most of them consider copying the work form the internet and guarding as their own created ideas.

**Table 4.6: Lecturer talking about plagiarism**

<b>has your lecturer ever talked about plagiarism</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
No	66	18.49
Yes	291	81.51
<b>Total</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Source: Field Findings, 2022**

When asked whether their lecturers had ever talked about plagiarism, the respondents agreed with 81.51 percent of the responses while 18.49 percent of the respondents said no. from the findings, it's evidenced that the lecturers talked about plagiarism before the respondents.

For the discussion, when students were asked whether their lecturers have ever talked about plagiarism, they responded yes which means most of the students have knowledge about plagiarism and they do it intentionally being the lecturers keeps on talking about the act to them. This can be evidenced in table 4.5 where they showed the ways they plagiarise being; copying during tests and exams, copying work from internet and submitting similar coursework.

**Table 4.7: Plagiarism as a problem at Kyambogo University**

Is plagiarism a problem at Kyambogo University	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	66	18.49
No	291	81.51
<b>Total</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Source: Field Findings, 2022*

From the table above when asked whether plagiarism is a problem at Kyambogo, 18.49 percent of the respondents said yes while 81.51 percent of the respondents said no. from the findings, plagiarism is a problem at Kyambogo University. Most of the students responded by saying plagiarism is not a problem at Kyambogo University which implies that they always conduct the activities that lead them to plagiarise making it hard for them to reveal it openly with the fear that the administration will be tight on those activities that they do conduct.

**Table 4.8: Policies regarding plagiarism**

Are you aware of any policies regarding plagiarism at Kyambogo University	Frequency	Percentage
No	347	97.19
Yes	10	2.80
<b>Total</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>100.00</b>

*Source: Field Findings, 2022*

When asked whether they were aware of policies regarding plagiarism at Kyambogo, 97.19 percent of the respondents said that they were not aware of the policies while 2.80 percent of the respondents said yes. Thus majority of the respondents are not aware of the policies regarding plagiarism at Kyambogo. The greater percentage of the respondents said they are not aware of the policies regarding plagiarism since they take plagiarism not to be a problem at Kyambogo University as seen in Table 4.7 above.

**Table 4.8: Controlling Plagiarism**

Do you think controlling/fighting plagiarism is necessary	Frequency	Percentage
No	311	87.11
Yes	46	12.89
<b>Total</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>100.00</b>

*Source: Field Findings, 2022*

The greater percentage of the respondents (87.11%) said that controlling/fighting plagiarism is not necessary while the lowest percentage of them (12.89) responded that they think



controlling/fighting plagiarism is necessary. Most of the students responded by saying they think controlling/fighting plagiarism is not necessary which implies that they always conduct the activities that lead them to plagiarise making it hard for them to reveal it openly with the fear that the administration will be tight on the activities related to plagiarism.

**Table 4.9: Importance of handling Plagiarism issues to both students and lecturers**

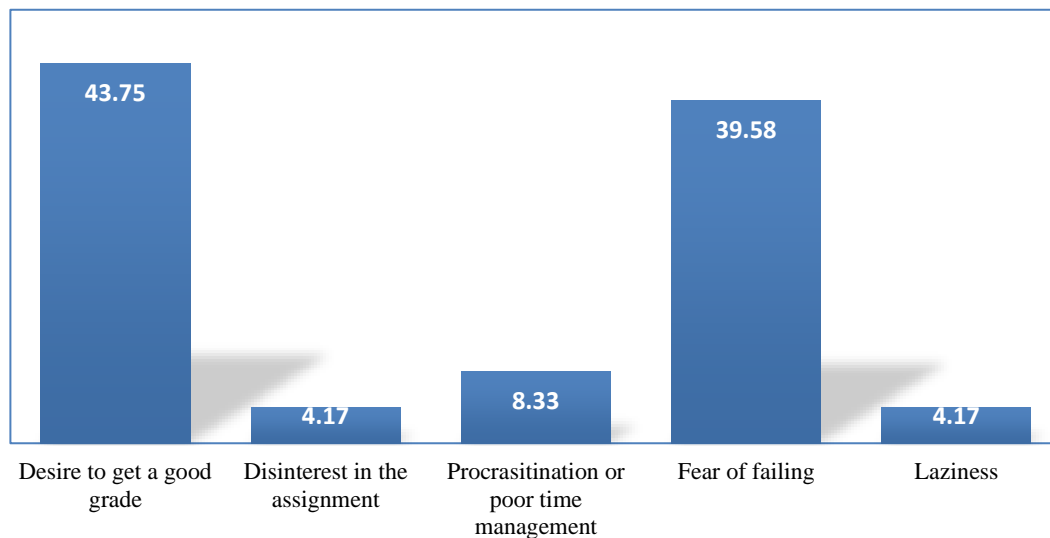
<b>Do you think handling plagiarism related issues is important to both students and lecturers</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
No	312	87.39
Yes	45	12.61
<b>Total</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>100.00</b>

*Source: Field Findings, 2022*

When asked whether handling plagiarism related issues is important to both students and lecturers, 12.61 percent of the respondents said yes while 87.39 percent said no. thus majority of the respondents said no. Most of the students responded by saying they think handling plagiarism related issues is not important to both students and lecturers as they always take plagiarism not to be a problem at Kyambogo University.

**Factors fostering plagiarism at Kyambogo**

*Figure 1: Factors fostering plagiarism at Kyambogo*



From the figure above, majority of the respondents (43.75 percent) said that they plagiarise due to the desire to get good grades, 39.58 percent said that they plagiarized for fear of failing while 8.33 percent said that they plagiarized due to poor time management. Thus getting good grades made the respondents to engage in plagiarism as evidenced from the findings. As per the findings from the field, majority of the students are always driven to plagiarise by the factors of desire to get good grade and fear of failing which always make them copy during test and exams, submit similar course works and copy work from the internet. Few number of the students had to agree that the factors that foster them to plagiarise at Kyambogo University include disinterest in the assignment, procrastination or poor time management and laziness basing on their understanding of plagiarism.

Fear of failing and struggle to get good grades always make students plagiarise with the claim that they have little idea about the possible cause and how plagiarism is done in the most academic writings as well as doing test and exams (Sibomana, Ndayambaje & Uwambayinema, 2018),

**Table 4.10: Addressing plagiarism**

<b>What do you think the university should do to address plagiarism</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Conducting seminars	60	16.80
Putting in place plagiarism detection software	57	15.96
putting plagiarism as a course unit	140	39.21
Motivating lecturers to teach students about plagiarism	100	28.03
<b>Total</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>100.00</b>

*Source: Field Findings, 2022*

On what to be done by the university to address plagiarism, 28.03 percent of the respondents said that the university should motivate lecturers, 16.80 percent said that the university should conduct seminars, 15.96 percent of the respondents said the university should put in place plagiarism detection software and finally 39.21 percent said the university should put plagiarism as a course unit. The greater percentage of the students based on putting plagiarism as a course unit and motivating lecturers to teach plagiarism to them meaning that if they do so, they will get to know plagiarism deeply. This is because plagiarism to be a course unit will make students to put emphasis in learning it deeply in order to enable them pass tests and exams. According to Emenalo (2016), students should be trained about the intellectual property rights and this can be done by defining plagiarism and including plagiarism policy on the syllabus to enable discuss intellectual property (Emenalo, 2016). Additionally, communicating consequences for plagiarism both in class, as well as outside class can help students develop respect for intellectual property and also providing them with concrete examples of plagiarism so they better understand the concept (Hamdoon & Al-Maawali, 2020).

**Table 4.11: Teaching plagiarism in courses**

<b>Do you think plagiarism should be taught in your course</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
No	159	44.53
Yes	198	55.47
<b>Total</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>100.00</b>

*Source: Field Findings, 2022*

From the above table, respondents were asked if plagiarism should be taught in their course, 55.47 percent said yes and also 44.53 percent said no. with this most respondents said yes in that plagiarism should be taught in their course. The greater percentage of students responded that they think avoiding plagiarism should be taught in their course since this can enable them have deep understanding of the act since the lecturers will be explaining more of how it is done, factors that foster it, and the possible ways of abating/avoiding the act.

**Table 4.12: Training in how to avoid plagiarism**

<b>Have you been trained in how to avoid plagiarism</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
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No	349	97.47
Yes	8	2.53
<b>Total</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>100.00</b>

*Source: Field Findings, 2022*

When respondents were asked about training on how to avoid plagiarism, 97.47percent said no and 2.53 percent said yes. In this many respondents said no which means they are not train on how to avoid plagiarism. The greater percentage of the students responded that they have never been trained about how to avoid plagiarism meaning that they do not have deep understanding of the act because it is through training when a person can be equipped with necessary skills and knowledge of a particular field or topic under discussion.

### **Summary of the findings**

From the demographic characteristics, male were more than female in terms of gender, on the age bracket most of the respondents were 25 years and above, most of the respondents were Bachelor’s degree student. When asked whether they have some idea about plagiarism, majority of the students responded yes to the question, and confirm to have ever plagiarized, by submitting similar coursework. However, they confirmed that lecturers have ever talked about plagiarism though they said that plagiarism is not a problem at Kyambogo University, and on another note majority said they are not aware of any policies regarding plagiarism at KYU and they don’t think controlling/fighting plagiarism is necessary as well as handling plagiarism related issues. Factors that fosters plagiarism include desire to get good grade among others and they suggested that plagiarism should be taught

### **Conclusion**

Based on the interpretation related to specific objective one, the study concludes that respondents have ideas about plagiarism. This was basically evidenced when respondents were asked about their understanding about plagiarism. Basing on the attitude of students towards plagiarism related to specific objective two, the study concludes that respondent’s believed that plagiarism is copying work from the internet without acknowledging the author. Considering factors that foster plagiarism among the students related to specific objective three, the study concludes that desire to get good grades has encouraged students to plagiarised. Basing on the Strategies to abate plagiarism relating to objective 4, the study concludes that putting plagiarism as a course unite and training students on how to avoid plagiarism will enable to abate plagiarism.

### **Recommendations of the findings**

Basing on the outcomes to specific objective one above, Researcher recommends that there is need to for both lecturers, supervisors, tutors and other students to educate students about plagiarism in order to create more understanding of plagiarism. Researcher also recommends that there is need to monitor and report progress by developing the measures of success during the education process on plagiarism and provide a way forward in advance. In view of the findings in specific objective two, researcher recommends that the university should organise literacy training that talk about plagiarism in order for the students to know different ways how plagiarism is created. Basing of the finding for specific objective three, researcher recommends that the students should be given guidance and advice on how to prevent plagiarism both by the lecturers, supervisors, tutors and other students through organising seminars concerning plagiarism. Basing of the finding for specific objective four, researcher recommends that plagiarism should be taught as a course unit in the university in order to abate plagiarism

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