



# Exploring Attitudes and Perceptions of Medical Students' Towards Unplagiarized Writing in Academia at Northern Border University (NBU) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA)

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**Abstract Aims and Objectives:** To assess attitudes and perceptions towards plagiarism in academic writing among medical students of NBU across the academic years and gender in KSA. **Methods:** A self-designed pre-validated questionnaire based on earlier studies related to our research questionnaire was administered as Google form to the participants who volunteered to take part in the study. A seminar on the research topic was conducted to create awareness about the research topic. **Results:** A total of 72 Responses were received, out of which 46[63.9%] are males while 26[36.1%] were females. Age distribution was as follows 18 years-2[2.7%], 19 years-11[15.3%], 20 years-18[25%], 21 years-25[34.7%], 22 years-16[22.2%] and responses according to academic level is First year-0[0%], Second year-14[19.44%], Third year-16[22.22%], Fourth year-28[38.8%], Fifth year-8[11.1%] and Sixth year-6[8.3%] and all students were of Saudi nationality. The p-value is [ $>0.05$ ] as for gender, age and year of study responses. **Discussion:** Plagiarism is an issue that is quickly spreading and has negative effects on learning, relationships between students and staff, barriers between peers, and institutional integrity. The academic and scientific communities have recently been particularly interested in issues of scientific misconduct and academic dishonesty. **Conclusion:** The present study suggests the awareness, perception and attitudes of students regards to Plagiarism are below the expected level.

**Key Words** Health Professional Students', Attitudes, Practices, Plagiarism, Academic Misconduct

## INTRODUCTION

Plagiarism is a fast-spreading problem that impairs interpersonal relationships between faculty and students, creates impediments between fellow students and colleagues, damages the integrity of institutions, and obstructs learning [1]. Academic writing misconduct and academic dishonesty have been the focus of interest of the academicians and researchers [2-6]. Any form of cheating that jeopardizes the institution's academic integrity and the educational process is considered academic misconduct. Scientific misconduct typically comprises fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, and other unethical activity in professional scientific study, although it also encompasses fraud, corruption, and sabotage [7-10]. Moreover, academic misconduct refers to a variety of dishonest actions that are essentially cheating, like receiving benefits that are not due.

If this type of behavior is allowed to continue, it will gravely harm the academic and scientific community's reputation, diminish the value of the educational process, and produce dishonest experts that go against the fundamental principles of education [11,12].

A greater emphasis on the aspects of plagiarism may have resulted from the early introduction of research-focused programs into medical schools and the encouragement of participating in research from the beginning in the medical school. Every medical and health science student and faculty member who in any position participates in research for their programs must be aware of plagiarism [13-24]. There we conducted this study with the aim, (1) To assess attitudes and perceptions towards plagiarism in academic writing among medical students of NBU across the academic years and gender in KSA, (2) To create awareness towards issues and

consequences related to plagiarism in academic writing among medical students of NBU in KSA and (3) To evaluate whether remedies towards plagiarism issues in academic writing are covered in NBU medical students curricula in KSA.

## METHODS

A self-designed pre-validated questionnaire based on earlier studies [25] related to our research questionnaire was administered to study the research questions as Google forms and the link was sent to the participants through various social media like Whatsapp, Linkdein, Telegram etc.

## RESULTS

Statistical Program for Social Science (SPSS) software (IBM SPSS v.20 Inc., Chicago IL, USA) is used to analyze the data in order to do a descriptive analysis. The findings are displayed as frequency distributions and percentages. The chi-square test is used to evaluate the relationship between different categorical variables. p-values of 0.05 or lower are deemed significant.

### Questionnaire

- Demographic data of participants
  - College
  - Gender
  - Age in years
  - Nationality
  - Year of study (Academic level)
- Distributions of responses in the questionnaire to the positive attitude, negative attitude and subjective norm attitude towards plagiarism (5-Strongly agree, 4-Agree, 3-Neutral, 2-Disagree, 1-Strongly disagree)
- Responses are displayed in Table 1-4 as percentages [%] and Number [n]

### Gender responses to Questionnaire

What is your gender:

- 46[63.9%] were males, 26[36.1%] are females

### Responses to Questionnaire as per Age in years

What is your age:

- 2[2.7%] students are of 18 years
- 11[15.3%] students are of 19 years
- 18[25%] students are of 20 years
- 25[34.7%] students are of 21 years
- 16[22.2%] students are of 22 years

### Responses to questionnaire as per their Academic level

What is your year of study:

- Zero [0] students of First year showed responses
- 14[19.4%] students of Second year showed responses
- 16[22.2%] students of Third year showed responses

- 28[38.8%] students of Fourth year showed responses
- 8[11.1%] students of Fifth year showed responses
- 6[8.3%] students of Sixth year showed responses

### Responses to questionnaire as per Student Nationality

What is your Nationality:

- 100% [72 number] students were of Saudi nationality

## DISCUSSION

Plagiarism is defined as conveying reflections, suggestions of others as self. Plagiarism in academic diaspora is an age old problem, which involves copyright issues along with loss of sense of self morality. It is considered unethical and can be subjected to reprisal by academic guardians. The issue of plagiarism has been in lime light in recent years due to the availability of various plagiarism detection tools. Awareness, attitude and perception of Plagiarism among students and faculty members is the need of hour as it can help the researchers to gain much needed knowledge to avoid and overcome the issue, which can have implications in scientific publications. The factors that affect Plagiarism can vary depending on the knowledge and academic environment of researchers and can include age, sex, academic level of researchers along with experience in dealing with it. Various universities across the globe has specific policies and regulations in place regards to plagiarism. Literature from an Australian University has put forwarded two aspects about Plagiarism, the first one involve the conceptual boundaries which is subjective and relative, whereas the second one involves circumstantiality of proof which is subject to comprehension [26]. Study from an American university has put forward an analytical view derived from across various faculties which suggested that university plagiarism policy based on conscience and controlled measures stands out to be in solitude, while student reception of policies were found to be difficult, so in conclusion it was suggested that more than implementation of policies it is the creation of acquaintance about plagiarism among students that is important to address the issue of plagiarism [27]. Reasons for plagiarism can include students attitude and perception about plagiarism, like students view of the act of reproducing reference material as justful, instead of recognizing it as unfair practice. In addition callousness and last minute efforts to meet deadlines such as assignments/home work/projects contribute to the problem. Also factors such as lack of knowledge about how to quote the reference and temptation to get readily available information in internet resources which serve as source of efficient reference that can overcome inability of the students which can be compounded by effect of community around them [28]. There are many plagiarism tools which offer variety of services, such as Plagium which offers advanced search solutions, Turnitin which provides online grading, originality check and peer review, Duplichecker and Plagiarism detector checks each sentence, while Glatt plagiarism program provides policies to deal with plagiarism

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis of Attitudes responses regarding Unplagiarized Writing in Academia among Students

No.	Items	5	4	3	2	1
1	Do you think you cannot avoid using other people's words without citing the source.	29.20% 21[n]	23.60% 17[n]	40.20% 29[n]	4% 3[n]	4% 3[n]
2	Do you think those who do academic misconduct by plagiarism should have disciplinary action against them by scientific committee.	30.60% 22[n]	22.20% 16[n]	30.60% 22[n]	15.30% 11[n]	1.30% 1[n]
3	Do you think It is justified to use previous facts or methodology without citing , because the method and facts itself remains the same.	22.20% 16[n]	31.90% 23[n]	31.90% 23[n]	8.00% 6[n]	6.00% 4[n]
4	Do you think It is justified to use one's own previously published work without providing citation..	16.70% 12[n]	30.60% 22[n]	22.20% 16[n]	11.10% 8[n]	19.40% 14[n]
5	Do you think academic misconduct of plagiarism is justified if you may currently have more important tasks to do.	20.80% 15[n]	26.40% 19[n]	30.60% 22[n]	15.30% 11[n]	6.90% 5[n]
6	Do you think self-plagiarism should not be punishable in the same way as plagiarism of other' student work is done.	20.80% 15[n]	25% 18[n]	34.70% 25[n]	13.90% 10[n]	5.60% 4[n]
7	Do you think those who say they have never plagiarized are lying.	16.70% 12[n]	25% 18[n]	47.20% 34[n]	11.10% 8[n]	0.00% 0[n]
8	Do you think plagiarized parts of a research paper may be ignored if the paper is of great scientific value.	23.60% 17[n]	25% 18[n]	36.10% 26[n]	11.10% 8[n]	4.20% 3[n]
9	Do you think plagiarizing or academic misconduct is as bad as stealing an exam.	20.80% 15[n]	15.30% 11[n]	34.70% 25[n]	18.10% 13[n]	11.10% 8[n]
10	Do you think If one cannot write well in a foreign language (eg, English), it is justified to copy parts of a similar paper already published in that language.	18.10% 13[n]	25% 18[n]	30.60% 22[n]	13.90% 10[n]	12.50% 9[n]
11	Do you keep doing academic misconduct because you haven't been caught yet.	13.90% 10[n]	19.40% 14[n]	29.20% 21[n]	22.20% 16[n]	15.30% 11[n]
12	Do you think plagiarized work does no harm to your assignment or scientific research ?	18.10% 13[n]	22.20% 16[n]	29.20% 21[n]	11.10% 8[n]	19.40% 14[n]
13	Do you think sometimes, it is necessary to plagiarize?	19.40% 14[n]	22.20% 16[n]	29.20% 21[n]	18.10% 13[n]	11.10% 8[n]
14	Do you think if your colleague allows you to copy from their assignment, then you are not doing anything bad, because you have their permission.	16.70% 12[n]	37.50% 27[n]	19.40% 14[n]	16.70% 12[n]	9.70% 7[n]
15	Do you think It is not so bad to plagiarize or do academic misconduct.	11.10% 8[n]	22.20% 16[n]	31.90% 23[n]	15.30% 11[n]	19.40% 14[n]
16	Average of Responses	19.91% 14[n]	24.90% 18[n]	31.85% 23[n]	13.68% 10[n]	9.73% 7[n]

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis of Perceptions responses regarding Unplagiarized Writing in Academia among Students

No.	Items	5	4	3	2	1
1	Do you know plagiarists are considered unlawful in the scientific community?	40.30% 29[n]	26.40% 19[n]	23.60% 17[n]	8.30% 6[n]	1.40% 1[n]
2	Do you think majority of the students do not agree that they have plagiarized, when in fact they do.	20.80% 15[n]	23.60% 17[n]	36.10% 26[n]	18.10% 13[n]	1.40% 1[n]
3	Do you think to meet the deadlines gives the right to do academic misconduct by plagiarizing?	18.10% 13[n]	22.20% 16[n]	27.80% 20[n]	23.60% 17[n]	8.30% 6[n]
4	Do you think it is justified to copy a sentence or two from the previous published research	27.80% 20[n]	19.40% 14[n]	30.60% 22[n]	15.30% 11[n]	6.90% 5[n]
5	Do you think self-plagiarism should not be punishable because it is not harmful to others?	20.80% 15[n]	25% 18[n]	34.70% 25[n]	13.90% 10[n]	5.60% 4[n]
6	In today's time of many ethical concerns, it is important to have knowledge about issues related to plagiarism and self-plagiarism and academic misconduct?.	30.60% 22[n]	37.50% 27[n]	27.80% 20[n]	3.10% 2.2[n]	1% 0.8[n]
7	Do you think you feel guilty for copying a paragraph or a sentence or two from your friend assignments.	26.40% 19[n]	20.80% 15[n]	33.30% 24[n]	13.90% 10[n]	5.60% 4[n]
8	Do you think young researchers who are just in beginning of learning about the research should receive milder punishment for academic misconduct.	25% 18[n]	31.90% 23[n]	27.80% 20[n]	11.10% 8[n]	4.20% 3[n]
9	Do you think sometimes you are tempted to plagiarize or do academic misconduct because everyone else is doing it .	18.10% 13[n]	26.40% 19[n]	31.90% 23[n]	12.50% 9[n]	11.10% 8[n]
10	Do you think academic misconduct weakens the student confidence.	25% 18[n]	26.40% 19[n]	33.30% 24[n]	7% 5[n]	8.30% 6[n]
11	Do you think you could not write a scientific paper without plagiarizing.	19.40% 14[n]	15.30% 11[n]	27.80% 20[n]	23.60% 17[n]	13.90% 10[n]
12	Do you like to study in a plagiarism-free environment?	23.60% 17[n]	19.40% 14[n]	38.90% 28[n]	9.70% 7[n]	8.30% 6[n]
13	When you do not know what to write, do you translate a part of a paper from a foreign language?	20.80% 15[n]	20.80% 15[n]	31.90% 23[n]	16.70% 12[n]	9.70% 7[n]
14	Do you think plagiarism should NOT be considered as a serious offense.	19.40% 14[n]	20.80% 15[n]	29.20% 21[n]	18.10% 13[n]	12.50% 9[n]
15	Do you think it is right to copy from the articles of someone else if your teacher has permitted you to do so.	15.30% 11[n]	31.90% 23[n]	23.60% 17[n]	15.30% 11[n]	13.90% 10[n]
16	Average of Responses	23.42% 17[n]	24.52% 18[n]	30.55% 22[n]	14% 10[n]	7.47% 5[n]

Table 3: Chi -Square Test for Attitudes Responses of Unplagiarized Writing Responses

Gender	Age in years	Years of Study	Responses [72]
Males-46	18 years-2 [n]	First year -0[n]	Strongly agree-14
Females-26	19 years-11 [n]	Second year -14[n]	Agree-18
	20 years -18 [n]	Third year -16[n]	Neutral-23
	21 years -25 [n]	Fourth year -28[n]	Disagree-10
	22 years -16 [n]	Fifth year -8[n]	Strongly Disagree-7
	-	Sixth year -6[n]	-
p-value->0.05	p-value->0.05	p-value->0.05	-

Table 4: Chi -Square Test for Perceptions Responses of Unplagiarized Writing Responses

Gender	Age in years	Years of Study	Responses [72]
Males-46	18 years-2[n]	First year -0[n]	Strongly agree-17
Females-26	19 years-11[n]	Second year -14[n]	Agree-18
	20 years -18[n]	Third year -16[n]	Neutral-22
	21 years -25[n]	Fourth year -28[n]	Disagree-10
	22 years -16[n]	Fifth year -8[n]	Strongly Disagree-5
	-	Sixth year -6[n]	-
p-value->0.05	p-value->0.05	p-value->0.05	-

issues, EVE2: Essay Verification Engine helps faculty members across the globe to check their pupils plagiarism activity online, PlagiServe helps to identify the changes made in research article relative to online reference source while Plagiarism.org doesn't allow former changes, Plagiarisma.net has inbuilt downloadable program which allows to check various online sites and downloaded formats, CopyCatch Gold detects complicity and single files inspection, EduTie.com helps academic organizations to identify and stop web based plagiarism, Jplag detects plagiarism in various sets of at source files, WordCHECK is used by personnel across the different fields, MOSS works to identify plagiarized files written by software languages, Urkund is electronic device based plagiarism detection method, PlagScan is a internet search engine based similarity checker, Viper is tool to make assignments free from similarity, Quetext is clever plagiarism detection software, that matches similarity with test document and web sources, Copyleaks plagiarism checker fights plagiarism and copyright infringement online, PaperRater.com is a fast method to check similarity and language, PlagiarismChecker.com finds out if researcher has duplicated the content from web source [29]. In a study conducted from Sweden it was noted that prevalence of plagiarism among students was relatively lower in female students and survey also showed higher denial of academic misconduct by female students adding to false sense of honesty [30]. Studies have presented various types of Plagiarism such as Ghost Writer, wherein the person duplicates phrase to phrase from other source, The Photocopy-significant portions of others work is copied, The Potluck Paper-wherein statements from different sources are put together without changing the native statement, The Poor Disguise-original content from source is maintained but alteration in the form of terms and statements are made, The Labour of Laziness-here the author writes article from different sources in his own words without any concept of his own, Self-Stealer-the researcher has duplicated his earlier article and presented as new, The Forgotten Footnote-here the title of researcher is mentioned without features of

reference, The Misinformers-wrong details of references are made to avoid detection, The Too-Perfect Paraphrase-citations are avoided in text but included in bibliography, Copy and Paste Plagiarism-the author duplicates statements and words from other source without alteration, Incremental Plagiarism-here the investigator doesn't acknowledge for the information he has taken, Word Switch Plagiarism-here statements are taken from others work without changing terms, Metaphor Plagiarism-here the analogy from the at source work is represented in the present work without acknowledgement of at source work, Idea Plagiarism-the concept or design of earlier work is presented in current work, Reasoning Style/Organization Plagiarism-logic of earlier work is duplicated, Data Plagiarism-when information is duplicated from different origins [31]. Recent study has demonstrated the effectiveness of Academic misconduct education to deal and curb the issue of plagiarism, wherein different lectures which include multioriented syllabus with the course goal of raising the acquaintance of acceptable practices surrounding plagiarism and academic misconduct, whilst at the same time, developing students' researching and writing skills. This is tested by a final written assessment, where in paragraphing, reference quoting, paraphrasing, concept building are analyzed [32]. In the present study Male students responses [63.9%] regarding questionnaire has exceeded females responses [36.1%], while the fourth year students showed maximum responses [38.9%] and 6th year students showed least response [8.3%], while the 21 years age group showed 34.7% and 18 year age group showed [2.8%] response. The findings of present study is in contrast to findings from europe wherein females showed 68.5% response [33]. In the present study p-value for responses of Gender, Age and academic level is more than 0.05, suggesting an alternate hypothesis. In the present study approval of responses is around 20-25% (Table 1 and 2) which is in accordance with study from India [34]. Literature has reported the high prevalence of academic dishonesty among students of higher educational institutes due to various influences, as noted by work place based professional misconduct [35]. Study from



pakistan has noted more awareness and acceptance of plagiarism in medical students as unethical compared to non-medical students [36]. Research from Saudi Arabia about responses to plagiarism has showed significant p-value [less than 0.05] in contrast to present study p-values [more than 0.05] as displayed in Table 3 and 4, due to the fact that education regarding Plagiarism and its implications are imparted in the curriculum [37]. The use of Antiplagiarism tools has helped students to detect and overcome plagiarism in their assignments as proved by use of Turnitin software in Australian university [38]. While in Northern Border University students has access to Safe Assign plagiarism tool which is incorporated in Online Teaching platform Learning Management System [LMS] Blackboard.

## CONCLUSIONS

In the present study the findings indicate that student awareness levels need to be improved and education regards to Plagiarism should be imparted to students to make them academically /scientifically competent.

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