Information Literacy Skills and Plagiarism among the Academic Staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa, Kwara State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Polytechnics are tertiary institutions which are established to extend the frontiers of knowledge in different disciplines through their tripartite activities of teaching, learning and research. Through research activities, polytechnics have helped in bridging the knowledge gap in the different sectors of the Nigerian economy. However, the implementation of quality research by the academic staff of Nigerian polytechnics is being marred by rising cases of plagiarism. This disturbing trend constitutes a threat to the objectives of polytechnics as it hinders the conduct of quality research work by these staff. Therefore, this study examined information literacy skills and the level of plagiarism among the academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa, Kwara State, Nigeria. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study while the stratified random sampling technique was used to select 234 respondents for the study. A modified questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents while the analysis of data collected was based on descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Findings from the study revealed a high level of information literacy skills and a high level of plagiarism among the academic staff of the polytechnic. There is a significant joint and relative influence of information literacy skills and attitudes on the level of plagiarism among the academic staff of Federal Polytechnic Offa, Nigeria. Recommendations such as sanctions for erring academic staff, use of plagiarism detection software and capacity development initiatives to upskill the information literacy competencies of the academic staff were proffered for study.

Keywords: Information literacy skills, Polytechnics, Research, Academic staff, Plagiarism, Federal Polytechnic Offa, Nigeria

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is an important concept which has been recognized as a powerful tool capable of effecting desirable changes in human society. Commonly defined as a process of transferring knowledge, skills, ideas, values, and beliefs among people in formal, semi-formal and informal settings, education also represents a means through which the orientations of people are changed for societal development. Education greatly contributes to the nation's socio-economic development and is a powerful tool for change (Owusu-Acheaw& Larson, 2014). Thus, the importance of education, especially higher education, to the development of human societies cannot be overemphasized. Higher education represents the highest form of training which is aimed at building competent individuals in different sectors of the country's economy.

Polytechnics are tertiary institutions established to provide adequate training for the middle level manpower required for the technical development of a nation. Polytechnic education, which is part of technical education programme in tertiary education level leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as fundamental scientific knowledge (Ukpai, 2019) Polytechnics educate future leaders and develop the middle-level technical capacities that underpin economic growth and development (Ekundayo&Ajayi, 2009). The fundamental objective of polytechnics is the training of professional skill workers who are supposed to constitute manpower to man (Abdulsalami and Salami, 2013).

Research is invaluable to the human society for the economic, social, cultural and intellectual benefits they bring. Academic staff of polytechnics conduct research in different areas of specialization, and they usually disseminate the

findings of their research activities through various channels such as conferences, journals, monographs, technical reports, proceedings, books and other types of scholarly publications. However, the implementation of cutting-edge research activities by the academic staff of polytechnics and other tertiary institutions is being marred by a high incidence of plagiarism.

Plagiarism is among the most prevalent challenges of higher education, including polytechnics, today. Khan (2016) defined plagiarism as a kind of breach of academic integrity as it is rightly believed to lessen or sometimes eliminate the real value of a scholarly work. Plagiarism represents the corruption of the process of independent and critical thinking which are the keys to adding to the body of knowledge (Gow, 2013).

Carroll (2002) defined plagiarism as the act of passing off someone else's work, whether intentionally or unintentionally, as one's own and for one's benefit. Plagiarism can be viewed as an act of academic dishonesty which entails unauthorized copying, manipulation and subsequent usage of someone's intellectual work without proper acknowledgment of such person(s). Plagiarism is a terrible crime which deprives owners of intellectual works the ability to enjoy the rewards accruable to their works. Plagiarism can be seen as depriving authors of profit that is rightfully theirs, which is theft (Moulton & Robison, 2002).

The high incidence of plagiarism is a major challenge to the academic community, especially, Nigerian polytechnics. Plagiarism is unethical, immoral, considered a theft of intellectual property and, as such, it is of interest to criminal law (Green, 2002). Plagiarism is rampant in the academia, among both students and lecturers/researchers and it occurs either knowingly or unknowingly (Shahabuddin, 2009). According to Soyemi and Ojo (2015), plagiarism is a problem that has eaten deep into the fabric of the quality of education that if not checked diminishes the whole essence of education by encouraging laziness, lack of academic integrity and lack of innovation. The advent of the Internet and the easy accessibility of open access resources have also increased the rate of plagiarism among academic staff of Nigerian polytechnics. The ubiquity of the Internet and its resources such as open access resources led academic staff to retrieve scholarly publications which were previously unavailable within a short period of time.

Onuoha and Ikonne (2013) corroborated this by stating that the incidents of plagiarism nowadays seem to be on the increase especially with the advent of Internet which made information more easily available and accessible without any geographical barriers; therefore, researchers can have access to any document in any part of the world as easily as possible. Furthermore, some academic staff engage in plagiarism due to their lack of awareness of this terrible act. Awareness in the view of (Reinhardt, et al. 2015) is the knowledge about an object or event, the competences or skills as well as the methods of operation; it has to do with background knowledge about the object, event or any other phenomenon. Some academic staff do not know what plagiarism entails and its negative effects on their academic activities, thereby leading them to engage in this act. This low level of awareness of plagiarism among academic staff could be a function of their information literacy skills.

Johnston and Webber (2003) defined information literacy as the adoption of appropriate information behaviour to obtain, through whatever channel or medium, information well fitted to information needs, together with critical awareness of the importance of wise and ethical use of information in society. Information literacy entails the competencies required to search for information from a variety of sources and use such information in the right way. Due to its threats to the advancement of the intellectual activities in Nigerian polytechnics, the issue of plagiarism is so crucial in the heart of the higher institutions management. Thus, this study will examine the information literacy skills and the level of awareness of plagiarism among the academic staff of Nigerian polytechnics to understand the pervasiveness of this act in the polytechnics.

Statement of the problem

Polytechnics are tertiary institutions which are established to extend the frontiers of knowledge in different disciplines and areas of human specialization. Academic staff of polytechnics strive to achieve this objective through research activities aimed at bridging the knowledge gap in the different sectors of the Nigerian economy. Unfortunately, recent spike in the cases of plagiarism is hindering the implementation of quality research in these polytechnics. The incidence of plagiarism could be attributed to the insufficient knowledge of academic staff on what constitutes plagiarism and its attendant effects. Also, some academic staff do not possess the necessary skills required for meaningful research in their areas of specialization. These insufficient research skills and low level of awareness of plagiarism make them to copy all or parts of

existing scholarly works and present such works as their own. The worrisome trend is further worsened by the advent of the internet which makes it easy for academic staff to access vast amount of information across different disciplines with few clicks. This terrible act contradicts the objective of establishing polytechnics and can ruin the reputation of the academic staff and their institutions at large. Globally, plagiarism constitutes academic dishonesty which is a threat to the advancement of scholarship in these institutions. Thus, it is expedient to investigate the information literacy skills, awareness and the level of plagiarism among the academic staff of Nigerian polytechnics to proffer solutions to this problem.

Research Objectives
This study aims at investigating the information literacy skills, awareness, and the level of plagiarism among the academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa, Kwara State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of this study are to:
i. find out the level of information literacy skills among the academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa, Kwara Nigeria
ii. assess the level of awareness of plagiarism among the academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa, Kwara State, Nigeria.
iii. ascertain the attitudes of the academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa towards plagiarism
iv. assess the level of plagiarism among the academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa, Kwara State, Nigeria
v. investigate the effects of plagiarism on the intellectual activities of the academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa, Kwara State, Nigeria.

Research Hypotheses
This study will be guided by the following null hypotheses which will be tested at 0.05 level of significance:
$H_0 1$: There is no significant relationship between the information literacy skills and the level of plagiarism among the academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa, Kwara State, Nigeria

$H_0 2$: There is no significant relationship between attitudes and the level of plagiarism among the academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa, Kwara State, Nigeria
$H_0 3$: There is no significant joint influence of information literacy skills and attitudes on the level of plagiarism among the academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa, Kwara State, Nigeria

II. METHODOLOGY
The study adopted survey research design The population of the study comprises the academic staff of Federal Polytechnic Offa, Kwara State, Nigeria. Presently, there are four hundred and seventy-one (471) academic staff in the six (6) schools and libraries of the polytechnic. The study, therefore, focuses on the different categories of academic staff which include Chief Lecturers, Principal Lecturers, Senior Lecturers, Assistant Lecturers, Lecturers, Principal Librarians, Librarians, Technologists and Instructors in the polytechnic. The information obtained from the registry (establishment) of the polytechnic revealed that there are (471) academic staff in the polytechnic. The total population of the respondents for this study is 471 and the stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure a robust participation of the academic staff in the polytechnics. To ascertain the sample size for this study, the population of the academic staff will be segmented into strata using the characteristics peculiar to them (designation). The academic staff in the six schools and library of the Federal Polytechnic Offa was stratified according to their designations such as Chief Lecturers, Principal Lecturers, Senior Lecturers, Assistant Lecturers, Lecturers, Principal Librarians, Librarians, Technologists and Instructors. Thereafter, a sampling fraction of 50 percent was selected from these strata to arrive at 234 academic staff. This percentage is aimed at selecting a sample that is representative of the entire population of academic staff of the polytechnics. This therefore gave a sample size of 234. Questionnaire is the data collection instrument that was adopted for this study.

III.   RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Table 1: Relationship between information literacy skills and level of plagiarism among the academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Df	R	P	Sig
Information literacy skills	162	81.48	11.90	161	.202	.010	S
Plagiarism among academic staff	162	16.30	3.30				

Table 1 shows the relationship between information literacy skills and level of plagiarism among the academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa. The finding reveals that Information literacy skills (r = .202; p<0.05) has significant positive relationship with level of plagiarism among the academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa. This implies that there is positive linear association between information literacy skills and level of plagiarism among the academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa. Thus, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between information literacy skills and level of plagiarism among the academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa is hereby rejected.

$H_0$2: There is no significant relationship between attitude and level of plagiarism among the academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa.

Table 2: Relationship between attitude and level of plagiarism among the academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Df	r	P	Sig
Attitude	162	29.38	6.10	161	.606	.000	S
Plagiarism among academic staff	162	16.30	3.30				

Table 2 shows the relationship between attitudes and level of plagiarism among the academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa. The finding reveals that attitude (r = .606; p<0.05) has significant positive relationship with level of plagiarism among the academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa. This implies that there is positive linear association between attitudes and level of plagiarism among the academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa. Thus, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between attitudes and level of plagiarism among the academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa is hereby rejected.

$H_0$3: There is no significant joint influence of information literacy skills and attitudes on the level of plagiarism among the academic staff of Federal Polytechnic Offa.

Table 3: Summary of regression analysis of the joint influence of information literacy skills and attitudes on the level of plagiarism among the academic staff of Federal Polytechnic Offa

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate				
.606[a]	.368	.360	2.637				
SUMMARY REGRESSION ANOVA							
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P	Remark	
Regression	642.696	2	321.348	46.219	.000[b]		

						Sig.
Residual	1105.483	159	6.953			
Total	1748.179	161				

Table 3 shows the joint influence of information literacy skills and attitudes on the level of plagiarism among the academic staff of Federal Polytechnic Offa. The finding reveals that there is significant joint contribution of the independent variables (comprising information literacy skills and attitudes) on level of plagiarism among the academic staff of Federal Polytechnic Offa. The finding also shows a coefficient of multiple correlations (R) of 0.606 and a multiple adjusted R square of 0.360. This implies that the 36.0% variance in the level of plagiarism among the academic staff of Federal Polytechnic Offa is accounted for by the independent variables when taken together. The significance of the composite contribution was tested at p<0.05 using the F-ratio at the degree of freedom (df- 2/161). The Table also showed that the analysis of variance for the regression yielded a f-ratio of 46.219. This implies that the above ANOVA result is significant at 0.05 level. Thus, the null hypothesis stating that there no significant joint influence of information literacy skills and attitudes on the level of plagiarism among the academic staff of Federal Polytechnic Offa is hereby rejected.

Table 4: Summary of regression analysis of the relative influence of information literacy skills and attitudes on the level of plagiarism among the academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			
Model	(β)	Std. Error	(β)	t	Sig	Remark
(Constant)	6.115	1.566		3.906	.000	-
Information literacy skills	.249	.048	.232	2.988	.026	Sig
Attitude	.322	.036	.596	9.063	.000	Sig

Table 4 reveals that there was significant relative influence on the independent variables comprising information literacy skills and attitude on dependent variable (the level of plagiarism) among the academic staff of Federal Polytechnic Offa expressed as beta weights. This shows that the predictive coefficients of information literacy skills and attitude on the level of plagiarism among the academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa, Nigeriais significant. Using the standardized regression coefficient to determine the relative predictions of the independent variables, the most potent contribution was from attitude (β = .596, t = 9.603, p<0.05) followed by information literacy skills (β = .222, t = 2.988, p<0.05).This implies both information literacy skills and attitude had significant relative influence on the level of plagiarism among the academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa, Nigeria.

IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS
Relationship between information literacy skills and level of plagiarism among the academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa

The hypothesis of study showed that there is a relationship between information literacy skills and level of plagiarism among the academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa. Research is an intellectual activity which requires information literacy skills to navigate and use information to provide answers to identified problems. Information literacy helps to interact with information to fulfill academic work and also to make efficient and effective use of information to avoid information overload (Adhikari, 2018). In a study of 1472 undergraduate and postgraduate students in three theological institutions in South-west, Nigeria, Oladejo, Alonge and Oyewole (2020) reported that there is a relationship between information literacy skills and level of plagiarism. The authors stated that as the level of information

literacy skills of the students increases, their attitude towards plagiarism becomes more negative.

Relationship between attitudes and level of plagiarism among the academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa

Findings from this study established that significant relationship exists between attitudes and level of plagiarism among the academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa. This implies that the incidence of plagiarism among academic staff can be linked to their attitudes on the terrible act. This finding aligns with that of Smith et al., (2007) that negative attitudes of undergraduate students towards work, including lack of interest and laziness, are consistent with the incidence of plagiarism in their activities. In another study, Kumar and Mohindra (2019) buttressed this finding by reporting that the attitude of the research scholars in an Indian university on plagiarism items was poor.

Influence of information literacy skills and attitudes on the level of plagiarism among the academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa

This study established that there is a significant joint and relative influence of information literacy skills and attitudes on the level of plagiarism among the academic staff of Federal Polytechnic Offa, Nigeria. This implies that the information literacy skills and attitudes of academic staff determine their level of involvement in plagiarism in the institution. This finding is in consonance with an earlier finding of Oladejo, Alonge and Oyewole (2020) which reported a significant negative relationship between literacy skills and the attitude towards plagiarism by the students of three theological institutions in South-West, Nigeria.

V.   SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The study examines the information literacy skills and plagiarism among the academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa, Kwara State, Nigeria. The study revealed several findings which are pertinent to the objectives of the study. From the data analyzed and the hypotheses tested, the findings revealed that:

1. The level of information literary skills by academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa, Nigeria is high.
2. There is a high level of awareness of plagiarism among academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa, Nigeria.
3. The academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa are ambivalent as they expressed mixed and conflicting reactions towards the acts of plagiarism in their institution. Some academic staff expressed a negative attitude towards plagiarism while others do not see it as a big deal.
4. There is a high level of level of plagiarism among academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa, Nigeria.
5. Plagiarism has some negative effects on the intellectual activities of academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa. The effects include erosion in the quality of scholarly writing, reduction in the integrity of academic staff in the polytechnic and obstruction to the advancement of knowledge through research.
6. There is a relationship between information literacy skills and the level of plagiarism among the academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa, Nigeria.
7. There is a significant relationship between attitudes and level of plagiarism among the academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa, Nigeria.
8. There is a significant joint and relative influence of information literacy skills and attitudes on the level of plagiarism among the academic staff of Federal Polytechnic Offa, Nigeria.

VI.   CONCLUSION

Plagiarism is a serious form of academic dishonesty which constitutes a threat to the intellectual activities of higher educational institutions globally. This menace of plagiarism is not limited to students of higher educational institutions, cases of plagiarism have also been reported among academic staff of these institutions whose responsibilities entail the implementation of research activities. Recently, the prevalence of plagiarism in the academic landscape has assumed a dangerous dimension due to the role of internet which has made it easy to download vast amount of information in different disciplines with few clicks. The negative effects of plagiarism on the academic activities of polytechnics include erosion in the quality of scholarly writing, reduction in the integrity of academic staff and obstruction to the advancement of knowledge through research in the polytechnics. Factors such as awareness, information literacy skills and attitude of academic staff greatly influence the level of plagiarism among the academic staff of Federal Polytechnic Offa, Nigeria.

Recommendations

In view of the findings above, the following recommendations were made to address the challenges of plagiarism:

1. The Academic Planning Unit, Federal Polytechnic Offa, in collaboration with the Polytechnic Library should develop relevant courses to upskill the information literacy competencies of academic staff across the polytechnic. Participation in such courses will enable academic staff to retrieve and use relevant information for their research endeavours with proper reference to the original authors, thus reducing the incidence of plagiarism in the institution.

2. An operational policy on plagiarism which will specify the institution's stand against all forms of academic dishonesty should be developed by the Federal Polytechnic Offa and disseminated to all academic staff of the polytechnic.

3. The management of the Federal Polytechnic Offa should recognize and provide adequate motivation to academic staff who conduct novel research in their disciplines while appropriate sanctions should be imposed on staff who engage in plagiarism.

4. Trainings, sensitization workshops and other capacity development initiatives should be organized for the academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Offa to increase their information literacy skills, level of awareness, and further equip them with knowledge of best practices in research. This is in consonance with the view of Nwosu, Obiamalu and Udem (2015) that information providers should assist researchers and information seekers in their search by teaching them different search methods or search engines that could be used when the method they know could not fetch them desired results.

5. Plagiarism detection software such as Turnitin should be employed to assess the originality of the research outputs of academic staff in line with the objectives of the Federal Polytechnic Offa, Nigeria.

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