Beyond the Grade: A Qualitative Exploration of How Undergraduates Experience the Consequences of Plagiarism

* Farva Bhutto
* PhD Research Scholar, University of Karachi, Karachi, Pakistan.

KEYWORDS

Cooperative Federalism, Covid-19,18ᵗʰ Amendment, Centralization, Decentralization

ABSTRACT

The concept of plagiarism has gained popularity in academic research. Multiple methodologies and variables have been used to understand this phenomenon. The present study aims to add its share in literature by exploring the consequences of undergraduate student plagiarism. The researcher has adopted Edmund Husserl's phenomenological approach to find out the essences of the experiences of undergraduate students. 17 final year undergraduate students participated in the study and in-depth interviews were taken from them. Data shows that the consequences of student plagiarism are not just limited to the penalties and marks deduction rather it deeply affects the academic, personal, psychological and professional areas of their life. Findings showed that they are not self-confident and are worried about their future. The feelings of guilt, anxiety and stress are also found to be related with plagiarism. These findings can be useful for the teachers and academicians to make students realize the importance of an honest and plagiarism free work.

Introduction

The definition of plagiarism is still evolving in research. The concept of plagiarism invokes complex judgments and consequences depending upon the intent of an author (Drisko, 2022). It also depends upon the cultural settings and perceptions of the people (Yi, Nemery, & Dierickx , 2022). There are different types of plagiarism and each type carries its own essence. Helgesson and Eriksson (2015) defined plagiarism as taking someone else's intellectual work and presenting it as your own but self-plagiarism deviates from this concept, using your own ideas in more than one places to gain benefits is known as self-plagiarism. Hence the borderline in the definition of plagiarism is getting a credit for a work which you haven't earned.

There are two components of plagiarism; literal and intelligent. Literal plagiarism is done by the people who are not smart enough or do not have much time to hide their academic dishonesty. They plagiarized the whole paragraphs and passages with little or no alterations. Whereas intelligent plagiarism is considered a serious crime. In intelligent plagiarism people manipulate other people's work, translate foreign language articles in another language, steal other's ideas and consciously present it as their own (Alzahrani, Salim, & Abraham, 2012).

The new technological era and digitalization have changed the dynamics of plagiarism. The old traditional ways of academic dishonesty are replaced by new ones. Earlier students use to plagiarize hand written assignments or work of other students in their own notebooks, but now it is just a touch away. The vast research on technology and plagiarism has shown that the impacts of technology are different on different types of academic dishonesty but it is directly linked with the plagiarism and students (Evering & Moorman, 2012; Ison, 2016; Sidi, Blau & Alkalai, 2019). The ease through which students are plagiarizing in digital era is alarming. The amount of efforts and work done as compared to earlier are none today. Everything they need is just on their

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fingertips. Mobile phones, laptops, tabs, smart devices and electronic communications have made the road towards plagiarism easier. Abusive use of information on these devices paves the road towards plagiarism (Jiang, Emmerton & McKauge, 2013). This affects the creativity and intellectual level of the students (Imran, 2010).

Recently this dishonesty has entered in online classes too. Absence of an authoritative figure and availability of video tutorials and material have boosted academic dishonesty. The same technology which has made dishonesty easier can be used to prevent it (Aaron & Roche, 2014). Different plagiarism detection software are designed to end plagiarism in academia but its usage is not prevalent in our culture. The degrees whose weightage depend upon the research work use this software. Research has proven that PhDs plagiarized less as compared to others and their dissertations and research work are not much affected by technology. Hence plagiarism is less in post graduate students (Ison, 2015). Plagiarism due to technology or internet in undergraduate and graduate students is alarming. Students admitting doing it despite knowing the ethical or moral misconduct behind it demands our attention (Szabo & Underwood, 2004).

Conventional Plagiarism Methods

The ways through which students, researchers and teachers plagiarize can be classified in two categories (Dey & Sobhan, 2006);

1. Intra Corpal Ways: these are usually adopted by students. It is mostly encouraged by the peers and group members. Little or no contribution in group assignments and submitting or getting credit for it comes under the intra-corpal occurrence of plagiarism.

2. Extra Corpal Ways: it is mostly done by researchers and teachers. It deals with the external sources of plagiarism such as books, journals and internet. Common among these are;

- Taking assignments from internet and submitting it as your own

- Purchasing assignments from private sources and submitting it as your own.

- Copy pasting sentences or verbatim from different sources (books and internet) without giving credits to the original sources.

- Translating foreign language articles or work without proper references and submitting it as your own.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to understand the impact of plagiarism on the lives of undergraduate students and to explore its consequences.

Consequences of Student Plagiarism

The consequences of the act decide its morality. If consequences are bad then it is considered morally wrong and if consequences are positive then it is considered morally accepted by the committers (Strike & Soltis, 2004; Collste, 1996). The consequences of student plagiarism depend upon its detection. The immediate consequences of plagiarism and cheating if not detected are always positive but it is detrimental in the long run. Students get good grades and their work is done through it. In the long-term analysis, they have deprived themselves of the knowledge which they were supposed and deserved to learn. On surface the consequences to others do not seem grievous. They still get their

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degrees and credentials no matter how many times they have cheated or plagiarized. But in close inspection it affects the society as whole where respect and responsibility lack. Students help their friends in copying and they think that they are actually helping them but in reality, they are teaching them to depend upon others and on short cuts. The students who work hard deserve better than the ones who plagiarized and cheated. Giving both of them the equal marks is an injustice to all of them (Björklund & Wenestam, 1999).

The consequences of student plagiarism if detected wary from minor to harsh punishments (Kalani & Twinwal, 2013), such as;

- The reduced grade is granted to the guilty students.

- Rejection of the assignments, projects or exams. Failed is marked on it.

- Redoing and resubmission of the project with given time in case of minor offences.

- Cancellation or the reconsideration of the degree in case of major offence.

- Expulsion in case of repeatedly found guilty.

Consequences of Unintentional Plagiarism

There are multiple reasons behind unintentional plagiarism such as lack of awareness, improper citations, imitating others and easily available material on internet. There are clearly stated consequences and punishments for intentional plagiarism if detected but unintentional plagiarism is still viewed as grey area in academia. Since its consequences are not direct therefore it is not considered a serious issue by many students.

Its consequences are faced by both students and institutes. The lack of creativity and original ideas can disrupt the reputation of the institute. It also affects the whole academic environment by affecting the originality of the institutes (Zhang & Yi, 2021) .

The intentionality behind the act plays an important role in criminology and ethics. Since intent is not involve in unintentional plagiarism therefore the consequences are not similar as intentional plagiarism. The consequences mostly depend upon the teachers and institutes. Some prefer correctional activities while other go for harsh punishments (Howard, 2000). The students who unintentionally plagiarize might not face the harsher punishments whereas authors and researchers face harsher punishments. In a scientific world both intentional and unintentional plagiarism are considered as plagiarism with equal punishments and consequences. The ignorance and laziness are not tolerated in a scientific community (Joob & Wiwanitkit, 2018).

Students who unintentionally plagiarize depend upon other's work and ideas. They do not know the importance of depending upon one own self for the problem solving. This attitude cultivates in them and they carry this behavior in professional world. Academic dishonesty leads towards professional dishonesty in future (Bultas, Schmuke, Davis, & Palmer, 2017). The consequences of an academic dishonesty might be bearable but the consequences of workplace dishonesty are more serious and grievous (Fontana, 2009). Therefore, preventing plagiarism at early stage is important.

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Consequences of Intellectual Theft

Researchers carry huge responsibility in scientific community. They are the ones who add new dimensions in knowledge and maintain its truthfulness. Their honesty, originality and ethics build the community stronger and trustworthy. Therefore, the consequences of plagiarism in a scientific world are completely different from the academia. Some leniency might be shown to the students but no mercy is spared to the authors who plagiarized. The author faces dire consequences if plagiarism is detected after the publication of an article. The journal issues a public apology letter and declared the author as blacklisted for time being. Intellectual property rights are claimed which further shadows the reputation of the author. Suspension of the license and research grants on the basis of immoral practices are also considered. The author faces mild consequences if plagiarism is detected before the publication. Authors get warning with correctional suggestions (Khadilkar, 2018).

Consequences Faced by Scientific Community

Following are the consequences which scientific community faces as a result of plagiarism (Selvam, 2021);

- It is very easy to plagiarize anyone's unpublished work. There is no law against this theft and as result of which author goes through tremendous mental trauma. Hence the scientific community gets deprived of the originality.

- The authenticity of the knowledge and science get questioned by it.

- Young researchers with limited knowledge of publication usually get robbed by the experience ones. They do not claim their rights due to the long and expensive process. They get dishearten and demotivated hence leave their subject and hard work behind. This way science cannot be benefited from their skills.

- The people who plagiarize and get away with it remain on their positions and transfer this immorality to others.

- The scientific publications are the criterion of promotion in a scientific community. If plagiarists get promoted then they do not just affect the present but rather the future too.

- People who accidentally plagiarize or are unintentionally involve in it get stigmatized due to the plagiarists.

- The students in academia are affected if plagiarists head them. This way the whole institutes suffer because of them.

Methodology

Qualitative phenomenological approach has been used in the study to understand the gravity of the effects or consequences of plagiarism on undergraduate students. Edmund Husserl, a German philosopher in 20th century introduced a new research methodology to study and discover the scientific facts. He said that existing scientific method (positivism) is reductionist, impersonal and mechanistic in nature therefore he proposed the phenomenological approach to study, understand and discover the meanings of life experiences (Byrne, 2001). He argued that the outer physical world and material things are nothing without inner feelings or subjectivity. The present study captures these inner feelings and consequences of plagiarism by exploring the live worlds of undergraduate students.

Data was collected through 17 final year undergraduate students who claimed to plagiarize the most in their studies. These students were chosen because of their

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exposure to the research writing and plagiarism (Sims, 1995; Power, 2009). Three different faculties of a public university in Karachi, namely; the faculty of social sciences, the faculty of administration and management sciences, and the faculty of pharmacy were included in the study. In-depth interviews were taken from the respondents. The core focus resided in the lived experiences of people and a researcher grasped the experiences of respondents by letting them talk freely about their thoughts, feelings and experiences. A non-directive approach was used by a researcher and respondents were asked open ended questions so that they can give descriptions in their own words and give their testimonies accordingly (Cypress, 2018). Students asked for the complete anonymity therefore codes are assigned to each respondent and no comprise has been made to their confidentiality.

Findings

As shown in fig 1, the consequences of student plagiarism are divided in to four major categories, namely; academic consequences, personal consequences, professional consequences, and psychological consequences. These categories are further divided into the sub-themes which explain the impact of plagiarism on students' lives.

Personal Consequences

These are the consequences which directly affect the personality of students. They are not found happy with it and they wish to be different if only they knew about it before starting their professional degree. Three sub-themes (fig 1) which explain the essences of it are discussed below:

Confidence

The most severe consequence of plagiarism is experienced through lack of confidence. Students who plagiarize do not have enough confidence to trust themselves and to express their ideas even if they are original. They have been dependent on other's work for so long that they have lost confidence of their own. They consider themselves average and do not try to come above it because they feel that they do not have an ability to do so. Lack of confidence limits their academic and professional goals.

"When you do things on your own it gives you different kind of confidence like believe that you can do this without relying on anyone and sadly, I don't have it because of plagiarism. I don't think I can do any new thing on my own. Even if I do have some ideas, I don't share it with others let alone put it in practice because I am not confident enough to do so." –R1

"I would have been a completely different person if I hadn't plagiarized at all. I would have a confidence which comes by producing your content because when you produce your own work then you are sure about it but now, I have doubts because I rely on others' work and have this constant fear that what if someone start questioning me about it." –R4

"I believe that I would have more confidence professionally if I avoided plagiarism from the very beginning because the confidence which comes from knowledge has no replacement." –R9

These students believed that producing the original work could have given them confidence to trust their ideas. They have been dependent on others' work so long that now they don't feel confidence to share their ideas with the world.

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"I do not feel sure about myself because of plagiarism. I am not confident about my work plagiarized or otherwise. I always have this feeling of constantly checking and confirming from others. I would have been more confident if plagiarism was not in my life, maybe I would be a one who gives advices to others instead of being a one which is on receiving end always." –R2

"I feel sad to say this that I have a low confidence. I cannot write a paragraph on my own and I cannot talk in English because all my skills are killed by plagiarism." –R6
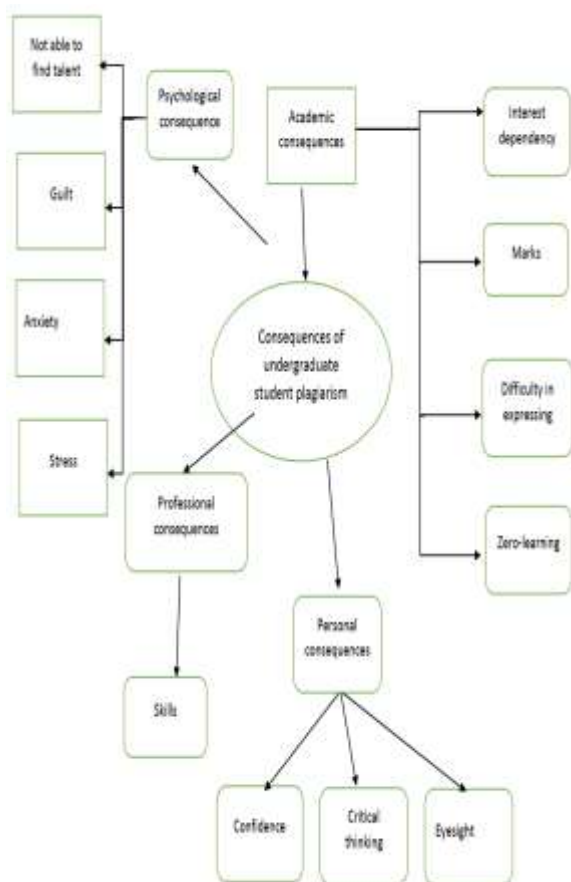

Figure 1: Consequences of Undergraduate Student Plagiarism.

"If I know something then I feel more confident about it in writing, conversing and acting but if I am copying then there is no

confidence because I have no knowledge about it hence no confidence." –R15

"Of course, plagiarism affects my confidence sometimes more or sometimes less. Like I cannot write on my own no matter how hard I try so mostly I don't even try which is a negative consequence. Positive consequence is that I can easily find material on google and use it in my work." –R12

Two of the respondents shared their class room experiences and said that they consider themselves average and don't feel comfortable in class participation.

"I feel difficulty in expressing my ideas because I don't have confidence on my own self. Different ideas come to my mind but I keep it to myself only because I think that my ideas are not worth sharing. Many times, it had happened in class that teacher asked something which I knew but couldn't answer because of lack of confidence and when the same answer came from another student, I started feeling secure but not confident. It is a huge barrier in my class participation which has come to non-existence these days." –R14

"Throughout my academic life I have been an average student and this is what I consider myself in everything. If I would have known about plagiarism before and avoided it then I would have been a completely different person. I see others doing the same thing which I want to do but I don't do it because I feel average and I feel I cannot do it like others. I feel frustrated too that what's special in them which is not in me, I am also a human like them and I can do it but I can't because this average thing is ingrained in my mind." –R8

Weak Eye sight

One of the respondents associated her weak eye sight with plagiarism. She was wearing

glasses and said that she did not have weak eye sight before starting university. Plagiarism makes her more dependent on internet and it has affected her eye sight badly.

"Too much screen time has affected my eye sight. Plagiarism requires a lot of surfing and you have to search a lot to find relevant material. My eye sight has never been that much affected before. It may not be directly related to it but I believe plagiarism is definitely behind it. I spend a lot of time on my phone and laptop to find the material for copying and I also make sure that its unique and not easily detectable." –R3

Critical Thinking

Plagiarism shuns critical thinking in students. It doesn't allow any thinking and does not entertain any new idea. Students become so dependent on other's ideas that they do not feel the need to come up with their own. The world is full of knowledge and ideas so they take them instead of contributing their own. They know their critical thinking abilities are affected by it and they do not feel proud of it.

"There are students who get good marks through plagiarism and I see them and feel motivated to do the same but now when I look back I realize that all of us have zero critical thinking, literally. I now realize that I have done wrong to myself but I don't give enough thought to it because the life I am living is very interesting, university life has its own joys and social media is attractive too." –R14

"My critical thinking capacity has been diminished in fact it is dead now. All my time is spending in thinking about how to survive in academia and rarely any time is left for the creativity and ideas." –R11

"This plagiarism has taken away my thinking ability like I don't think at all because I get everything readymade and when things are easily available then I just take them and don't put enough emphasis on thinking. I have zero critical thinking and I do feel bad about it. I avoid the situations where I have to say something or sharing my opinions." –R6

"The same outdated knowledge is circulating in our system, no new things are coming out because of plagiarism. I sometimes experience this mind numbness and no fresh ideas come to me. At times like these I feel so demotivated and even at one point decided to leave my studies because what is the purpose anyway!" –R5

"Basically, critical thinking is not involved in plagiarism. It doesn't require deep thinking so my knowledge becomes limited. I cannot debate or discuss anything with anyone because of it." –R15

Some students shared their fear that their ability to come up with innovative ideas is reducing with time because of plagiarism.

"I would have been utilizing my knowledge more skillfully if I didn't plagiarize from the beginning. It has affected my creativity and critical thinking. The ideas which should have been part of my field are not here because I don't welcome it and I don't work on it as I should have been." –R9

"Earlier new and creative ideas came to me easily and they still do when topic is interesting and when I do it myself but it is different now. They are not as frequent and useful as they used to be." –R13

"I feel like I don't have enough knowledge and I cannot debate with anyone because I don't have the ideas or points which others have. My critical thinking has reduced and it's not same as others." –R12

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"It's not that I have zero ideas or critical thinking, it's just sad that I don't have any out of the box or creative ideas in a long time. Everything has a price and I think this is the price which we pay for plagiarism." –R4

Professional Consequences

The consequences of student plagiarism are not only related to academic life rather it impacts their professional world too (fig 1). Students who plagiarize are not found to be satisfied with their knowledge and degree. Therefore, they are not willing to contribute in their field and continue working in it. They are mostly interested in jobs which demand less critical thinking and are not very challenging. The years of professional degree education do not convince them to be a part of it and build it with others. Wanting to switch fields and pursuing simpler jobs are the results of student plagiarism.

"I am not going to be working in my field in future because I know I don't have enough knowledge about it and I am not going to torture myself anymore. I might go towards teaching or banking which demands same work every day but not brain related work." –R2

"I am married and my husband is the sole earner of our family so I want to work after my degree and will help him financially or at least will bear my own finances. Girls should work too, why putting all the financial burdens on husbands only. But I have anxiety about my future because a master's degree is not enough in my field to get a good job and on top of it, I am not good in it! So, I will settle for teaching in a school, this way I will earn something than nothing." –R7

"I am not going to work in my field because I know I have degree but not enough knowledge related to it so I might work in a parlor or might open my own set up in future but not a work related to my field." –R13

Skills

Skills are found to be greatly affected by plagiarism. Students believe that university shapes and sharpens skills but they have experienced none due to plagiarism. They have compared their skills before coming to university and at the end of university. They did not find any major changes in it. According to them their reading, writing, vocabulary and critical skills are greatly reduced by plagiarism, and they are found afraid that it may affect their professional life too.

"My concepts are not clear. Now I believe that there are things which I should have known but I don't know them. This has badly affected my skills." –R15

"My writing skills are very poor because I have never written anything on my own. The structure, content and vocabulary everything is not as it should be and I know plagiarism is behind all these things." –R6

"My core experience of university life is affected by plagiarism. We are here to learn and research but I didn't do it much. The skills which should have been developed by assignments remain dormant in me because of plagiarism." –R9

"I have this fear that in future I might not create something of my own because plagiarism has limited my skills and I don't have words or ideas for any content. It makes me dependent on others." –R4

"For me plagiarism is like a disease. I can't get rid from it. Just like disease eats our vitamins, plagiarism eats my skills." –R2

"Plagiarism has certainly declined my skills, both related to field and critical

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thinking. I cannot come up with new ideas or participate in a debate just like others." –R14

"My writing and language skills would have been polished if plagiarism was completely removed from my life. Exams do not teach us as much as assignments do and plagiarism in assignments takes away its real essence." –R11

Psychological Consequences

Students who plagiarize the most are found to be psychologically affected by it. They experience stress, anxiety and guilt for their behavior and are also found to be worried about their future. They are found to be struggling with finding their talent which also works as a burden for their mental health. The description of the themes shown in fig 1 are described below:

Stress and Anxiety

Data shows that students who plagiarize the most experience stress and anxiety in their academic life. They worry about their marks deduction and reputation in class or in front of teachers if their plagiarism gets caught. They are also found to be anxious about their future and skills because of plagiarism. They do not know how to come out of it and what to do after it. This stress and anxiety increase during the time of submission and result day.

"I do have stress and anxiety for future because plagiarism affects my academic life. The assignments which I submit are read by the teachers who have checked hundreds of assignments before and they recognize plagiarized material. So, my reputation in front of teachers is somewhat affected by it and I feel bad for it." –R15

"I feel stress and anxiety about my future because I don't know where to apply and how to apply. On top of it all I feel anxious about my skills and talent too." –R8

"I feel anxiety at the time of assignment submission only because I know it is plagiarized and what if it gets caught, all my reputation in front of teachers will be shattered and I do have some kind of reputation here, personal and academic. But this anxiety is for time being only not a long term because my plagiarism has never ever detected in these last three years and I am sure it is not going to be detected in this year too." –R9

"I feel stress, depression and anxiety all because of plagiarism. I think plagiarism is like a quicksand I cannot come out of it and I cannot see any other way to overcome my academic burdens at this time. So, it just sucks me in." –R2

"I feel a lot of stress and anxiety till the result day. I have a certain reputation in class and I am afraid what will happen if my plagiarism gets caught. Marks will also be affected by it, even though it has never been detected but anxiety remains." –R11

While two of the respondents in data said that plagiarism works as a stress releasing tool for them. They experience stress and anxiety when they are assigned any academic work and plagiarism makes their work easier therefore, they consider plagiarism as a blessing.

"Plagiarism sometimes work as a stress releasing tool because when I have piled up academic burden then plagiarism releases my stress." –R1

"I don't feel guilty for plagiarism because everyone does it and nobody feels guilty. Academic pressure and deadlines give me stress and anxiety so plagiarism makes me happy and solves my problems. I even help others and send those links to solve their problems too. It is easy and marks are gained too." –R7

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Guilt

Two of the respondents shared their experience of guilt while doing plagiarism. They feel guilty because they have not learned as much as they expected to learn in university. They know that certain expectations are attached to them from their teachers and family, not meeting these expectations make them feel guilty. They see their skills and know that it needs work but despite of it they continue doing plagiarism. It makes them feel guilty and this feeling remains with them whenever they plagiarize in their assignments or reports.

"I don't feel anxiety but I do feel guilty while submitting a plagiarized work because I have some reputation in front of teachers. I am not in a list of best students but I am neither in a worst so I feel guilty sometimes. It feels like betraying them." –R10

"Well, I never feel anxiety because I know I can overcome plagiarism in future only if I start working hard but I do feel guilty sometimes because here I am for learning and I am not doing what I am supposed to do. I am not doing justice to myself." –R6

Not Able to Find Their Talent

Data reveals that students who plagiarize are not sure about their talent. At the end of their graduation life, they are not able to locate their talent. They do not know what to do after graduation and what they actually want to do. Upon asking about their talent, they all were confused and unable to answer it properly. They feel that they still have to find their passion and they are not sure how to find it. Plagiarism makes their academic life easier therefore they do not ask talent related questions to themselves. Plagiarism makes them focused on the immediate gains and lost the sight of a bigger picture.

"I know every human being has some kind of talent but I haven't explored my own talent. I don't know about my own skills or talent. I don't know how, when and where to utilize it! I am gaining some interest in my field now so maybe I will find something at the end of final year or maybe not." –R8

"These days I am always in a state of confusion I don't know how to describe it like I feel I am not sure about my own talent. I don't know what I am gifted of and what I can do better. Other people are very talented, they paint, they read, they write, they produce content and what am I doing? Just studying and that too average! What am I going to do with this degree if I don't know where to utilize it? I don't know my purpose because of plagiarism." –R7

Academic Consequences

Academic consequences shown in fig 1 are not the conventional consequences mentioned in literature, rather they are indirect consequences which affect the students' academic life and limit their academic growth.

Reliance on Internet

Students who plagiarize feel the constant need of approving everything from internet before writing or sharing it with others. They feel that internet has all the answer available and they can never do better without it. Therefore they remain dependent on it and plagiarize to get their work done.

"The most negative consequence of plagiarism for me is dependency on internet. I cannot write anything on my own and anything at all without opening google first. I don't even try to write because internet gives me confidence and without it I can't do anything." –R12

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"I believe that more attractive material is available on internet and definitely more impressive than my own writing so I take it from internet. In a long run when I look back, I realize that how much I am dependent on internet. I don't know what I will do if internet is not around." –R14

"My memorization has been slowed down because of google. Why think when readymade and polished material is available there. I became so paranoid that I used to confirm even the basic common-sense things from google before writing or saying anything. I accepted things the way they are rather than brainstorm or view it from different perspectives but now I have started working on it and I refrain myself from opening google every now and then." –R17

"Students like me are greatly dependent on internet and other plagiarism sources because this is what we have been doing throughout our academic live. I have fear of future because I have limited words and knowledge and I am afraid it might affect my professional life." –R4

Zero Learning

Students who plagiarize have associated limited or no learning with plagiarism. They believe that learning through plagiarism is for time being only and they usually forget it afterwards. They take whatever they find without giving much thought about the material therefore they do not learn in this process. Learning requires time and concentration while plagiarism is against it.

"It is not that we learn nothing in plagiarism, of course I do learn something from it but this learning is for time being only. I have difficulty in retaining knowledge in plagiarism. Like I understand what material is saying but I will forget it soon, I know I will because this is what usually happens with me and it doesn't happen when I try to write on my own." –R16

"Plagiarism definitely affects learning, like I am in a final year and I will have a degree next year but I don't have much knowledge about this degree. This is why I am not planning to pursue any work related to my field." –R13

"I think plagiarism varies from discipline to discipline. We are different from social sciences students because when they plagiarize, they still have room for creativity and learning, they still can add something here and there but when we plagiarize then we don't have anything to add our own we just rattafy (memorize) the material as it is, hence learning is affected too." –R1

"I don't have much knowledge and information which I should have if plagiarism was not in my life. I think I might have been more academically bright student as compared to now." –R15

"There is no learning in plagiarism. I used to think that there is some learning but it's not. Plagiarism just gives us an idea that what to do but why, how and when are not answered. I would say there is 20% learning in it while 80% nothing." –R6

"Plagiarism bounds me to the plagiarized material only. It restricts my learning by not allowing any creative ideas of my own." –R2

"There is no learning at all in plagiarism, nothing, just a guilt now and not knowing how to come out of it." –R8

Difficulty in Expressing

Plagiarism affects communicative or expressive power along with confidence and skills. Students shared their lived experiences in which they had something worthy to share but they couldn't express themselves

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properly. They feel trapped to be in this situation where they can't communicate their ideas and views to others.

"I have no talking power because of plagiarism and I don't have proper vocabulary as others. My communication skills are good but not good enough to express myself and my ideas properly." –R6

"I am not very expressive even when I do have some ideas, I just keep it to myself because I believe they are not worth sharing and sometimes I don't know how to express it." –R15

"I don't feel this freedom to freely express myself and freely do whatever I want to do. I do teach many topics to my friends here but it is mostly field related only while no creativity of my own." –R4

Structural Description of the Data

The consequences found in the present study are completely different from the consequences in general literature pool. Students who plagiarize the most face indirect consequences of plagiarism which directly affects their personal, professional and academic life. They are not found to be confident about themselves because of plagiarism. They have relied on others' work and ideas for so long that they question their own ideas and thoughts, they do not know how to present it as good as others' present their ideas.

They suffer in critical thinking too. They cannot think out of the box and are found to be stuck with the mainstream ideas only. They accept things as they are and do not analyze it critically. They know that their critical thinking power is shrinking but they do not know how to stop it. The lack of confidence along with lack of critical thinking ability make them feel different from others. They admire others who are full

of confident and critically intelligent than them but they feel that they can never be like them because their reasons and circumstances are different from others.

Plagiarism also affects their academic life by robbing them of learning. They do not learn anything in plagiarism and their skills remain dormant in them. They also feel shy to participate in class discussions or activities because they feel that they are not as good as others are in expressing their ideas. They do not share their problems with teachers because they believe that there is no positive outcome of it therefore all their queries are tackled by internet which furthers plagiarism in their life. As a result of which they become so dependent on internet that they cannot write single thing without confirming it first from internet sources. They are also the ones who are found to be the average or below average students and they have accepted their fate as it is. The whole of their academic experience changes because of this mind set.

Plagiarism also gives them unwanted feelings of stress, anxiety and guilt. They are afraid of the unknown academic consequences of plagiarism and feel anxious about their reputation in front of teachers and fellow students. They feel stress and anxiety at the submission of their work and are found to remain anxious till the result day. They sometimes feel guilty of doing plagiarism because they know that their money and efforts are wasting but they cannot do anything about it. The constant burden of not finding their talent also plagues them. They are not able to find their talent or satisfy with themselves even after spending so many years in academia. The unfortunate thing is that they are not hopeful to find it in future too.

This affects their professional life. They are found to be passive about their

professional life and feel that they do not have skills and talent to thrive in a professional world. They have accepted their average rank and think that they will remain mediocre in their professional life too. Even though plagiarism on surface seems a personal and non-harmful act but it is found to affect the core areas of students' life which shapes their present and future.

Conclusion

The consequences of plagiarism found in the study are very unique and the first of its kind in research. This study differs from conventional studies on academic misconduct by highlighting that the consequences of plagiarism are far more intricate and profound than traditionally understood. These consequences extend into the realms of psychological distress, personal hardship, and even professional setbacks, highlighting the previously underexamined nature of this issue. It also provides the foundational understanding of these hidden consequences through student's own life worlds and encourages a re-evaluation of how plagiarism is viewed and addressed in academia.

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