

## INDONESIAN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF PLAGIARISM: A SURVEY STUDY

Umi Sismia Wardani<sup>1\*</sup>, Ista Maharsi<sup>2</sup>  
<sup>1</sup>umisismia56735@gmail.com <sup>2</sup>ista.maharsi@uii.ac.id

UNIVERSITAS ISLAM INDONESIA

### ABSTRACT

This study aimed to identify Indonesian undergraduate students' perceptions of plagiarism in an English language education department at a private university in Indonesia. This method in this study is a survey study and the instrument in this study used a questionnaire, which means is quantitative research. The data were collected using a 22-item questionnaire on plagiarism awareness adapted from Jereb et al. (2018). One hundred three students taking Academic Reading and Writing classes participated in this study. The students who filled out the questionnaire on Google Forms used 5 – a point Likert scale to respond to the statement. It can be seen the results of the data from five aspects. The highest score belongs to the awareness of plagiarism (M= 4.2; SD= 1.138). The second-highest score belongs to the aspects of plagiarism knowledge (M= 3.12; SD= 1.118). The third-highest score is the attitude towards plagiarism (M= 2.45; SD= 1.012). The fourth-highest score belongs to the aspects of acceptability of plagiarism (M= 2.38; SD= 1.032). Then, the lowest mean score belongs to the unknowingness of plagiarism (M= 2.18; SD= 1.092). The findings showed that most students are aware of plagiarism, although plagiarism is wrong. Plagiarism occurs due to several demands from teachers or institutions; another plagiarism factor is a lack of knowledge about plagiarism.

*Keywords:* Academic reading and writing, Perceptions, Plagiarism

### A. INTRODUCTION

The issue of student plagiarism has long been a concern for educators and has received increasing attention in recent years. Plagiarism behavior, commonly referred to as plagiarism, needs to be considered, especially in an academic or educational environment. Plagiarism is someone takes other people's words or ideas and considers the work their own (Fishman, 2009). As teachers, many of them find plagiarism a form of dishonesty in the classroom. Several years ago, there have been many cases of plagiarism in writing papers in universities and the private sector (Gunawan, 2014). Plagiarism is an old problem in the world of education, and this case never disappears (McCabe et al., 1996). It is a severe problem in academic fields and can be considered an act of crime against copyright in scientific work. Plagiarism is a fraudulent act in which a person takes another person's ideas for their benefit (Fatimah & Wulandari, 2018), and academic offenses that become a growing concern in academic contexts worldwide (Jones et al., 2005). Plagiarism not only gives

students an unfair advantage but also violates copyright laws (Fishman, 2009). Plagiarism has many kinds of definitions. The kinds of plagiarism are theft, plagiarism as fraud, and plagiarism as copyright infringement (Fishman, 2009).

In Indonesia, undergraduate students commit plagiarism for several reasons, such as lacking citation knowledge, time, and ideas for their papers, being frustrated with difficult papers, and the absence of severe academic dishonesty punishment (Fatimah & Wulandari, 2018). The factors influencing plagiarism include personal factors, ICT, Web regulations, academic skills, teaching factors, different forms of pressure, student pride, and another reason (Jereb et al., 2018). Plagiarism has become much easier in this 4.0 era due to easy access to information (Ashworth et al., 1997). Another study found that plagiarism occurs because several factors influence it, named individual factors (e.g., gender, average level, work ethic, self-esteem), institutional factors (e.g., faculty response to cheating, threats of sanctions, code of honor), and contextual factors (e.g., perceptions of the severity of penalties for cheating) (McCabe et al., 1993). It means the internet is considered a place for students to commit plagiarism. The individual characteristics related to gender influence the occurrence of plagiarism (Jereb et al., 2017). Plagiarism occurs more frequently in boys than girls (Newstead et al., 1996).

However, it is essential to remember that plagiarism is bad behavior. The academic offense was often accompanied by fraud, academic dishonesty, and moral failure (Hu & Lei, 2014). For example, beginner writers who need help with paraphrasing, batch writing, summarizing, and synthesizing when citing a source are susceptible to plagiarism. The authors might tend to plagiarize in source-based writing due to a lack of proficiency, practice, and training (Borg, 2000). The academicians view plagiarism as an institutional policy that classifies plagiarism as a form of severe academic violation and must be followed up by imposing sanctions that lead to the expulsion of the institution (Flint et al., 2006). Although there have been many studies on the perception of plagiarism, studies conducted in the university context still need to be continued. As plagiarism can hinder students' development, it is an exciting issue to be discussed among the academic community, especially in the current technologically advanced society (Ashworth et al., 2003), which is relevant to students who have a digital native nature.

The student who commits plagiarism sometimes feels afraid, unknowingly. Some students get scared when they plagiarize well without realizing it (Ashworth, Bannister & Thorne, 2006). The student who commits plagiarism panics because plagiarism is the wrong action. The spread of moral panic can be described as plagiarism (Wilkinson, 2009). The students experienced many difficulties when writing in English, such as quoting statements from people who were quoted. When citing sources, beginner writers need help with paraphrasing, batch writing, summarizing, and synthesizing (Hu & Lei, 2014). In addition, if cited inappropriately due to a lack of proficiency, practice, and training, writers may be prone to plagiarism in source-based writing (Borg, 2000). Students who commit plagiarism are subject to sanctions because this action is considered a form of violation. Academics view plagiarism as an institutional policy that classifies plagiarism as a form of serious academic offense and should be dealt with penalties that result in the institution's expulsion (Flint et al., 2006). A form of movement handled by academics as punishment for serious plagiarism violations that lead to expulsion from the institution or is known as a dropout (Wilkinson, 2009). The new findings of this study are most students know the meaning of plagiarism because their university had a session on plagiarism. The students only know the meaning

of plagiarism, not how to practice it in their papers, so they did not know that plagiarism has different types. Then, they feel aware if did plagiarism although plagiarism is the wrong thing to do. They still do it because they have pressure from anywhere, such as getting a high score from the teacher, limiting the deadline, etc. Therefore, this study aimed to explore and identify students' perceptions of plagiarism at a private university with English writing practice.

## B. METHOD

This method in this study is a survey study and the instrument in this study used a questionnaire, which means is quantitative research. The data were collected using a 22-item questionnaire on plagiarism awareness. One hundred and sixty-three undergraduate students of English language education at a private university in Indonesia who took Academic Reading and Writing course. This course is a mandatory class where students learn how to know the basic knowledge of plagiarism. This class was implemented to inform students about plagiarism's importance in their papers.

The present study adopted a questionnaire for plagiarism awareness from Jereb et al., (2017). The questionnaire was divided into five aspects: awareness of plagiarism, plagiarism knowledge, unknowingness of plagiarism, acceptability, and attitude toward plagiarism. The questionnaire had 22 items with 5 – a point Likert scale to respond to the statement of the questionnaire, from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = uncertain, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree). The questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms to 163 students, and hundred and three gave their responses. The participants' responses were then analyzed through descriptive quantitative using SPSS 26 to identify their perception of plagiarism in the class. The overall results were sorted from the highest to the lowest score to determine which aspects had the stronger perceptions. Then the results of each aspect are presented by sorting the items from the highest to the lowest average. Thus, the data pattern becomes apparent, and several interpretations of the results are formulated.

The reliability of this study was carried out using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Cronbach alpha of 0.6-0.7 represents an acceptable level of reliability, and 0.8 is a greater level. However, a score higher than 0.95 is not necessarily good (Ursachi et. Al., 2015). The translated questionnaire was also verified by a lecturer fluent in English and Indonesian. For reliability, the Cronbach alpha for the questionnaire is 0.756, so the questionnaire is reliable.

## C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The result of this study was divided into five dimensions; they are (1) awareness of plagiarism, (2) plagiarism knowledge, (3) unknowingness of plagiarism, (4) acceptability of plagiarism, and (5) attitude towards plagiarism. The five dimensions can be seen in table 1.

**Table. 1** Students' Perceptions of Plagiarism Based on The Aspects

<b>Perception of Plagiarism Aspects</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Awareness of Plagiarism	4.2	1.138
Plagiarism Knowledge	3.12	1.118
Attitude towards Plagiarism	2.45	1.012
Acceptability of Plagiarism	2.38	1.032
Unknowingness of Plagiarism	2.18	1.092

Table 1 shows the aspects from the highest mean to the lowest. The highest score belongs to the awareness of plagiarism (M= 4.2; SD= 1.138). The second-highest score belongs to the aspects of plagiarism knowledge (M= 3.12; SD= 1.118). The third-highest score is the attitude toward plagiarism (M= 2.45; SD= 1.012). The fourth-highest score belongs to the aspects of acceptability of plagiarism (M= 2.38; SD= 1.032). Then, the lowest mean score is the unknowingness of plagiarism (M= 2.18; SD= 1.092).

### 1. The Awareness of Plagiarism

Plagiarism in academic contexts has received the attention of both teachers and students. Plagiarism is one form of fraudulent behavior. It means this behavior is an unethical action to take. Therefore, awareness of plagiarism is essential for students to avoid deviant behavior. It means that the most important aspect of education was to ensure students were aware of plagiarism. The result on the awareness of plagiarism aspect can be seen in table 2.

**Table 2.** Results on Awareness of Plagiarism Aspect

No	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	I know what plagiarism is	4.44	.936
2	I am sure that plagiarism is a form of cheating	4.33	1.216
3	I believe that plagiarism is unethical	4.23	1.238
4	I am sure that plagiarism is a form of cheating	4.18	1.344
5	I think it is possible to avoid plagiarism	4.13	.957

Table 2 above shows that item 1, "I know what plagiarism is," has the highest score (M= 4.44; SD= .936). It showed that the number of respondents who showed their strong agreement with the first item. It means that the students understand the meaning of plagiarism. It is in line with Rodhiya et al., (2020) that most students claimed to understand the meaning of plagiarism. However, item 5, "I think it is possible to avoid plagiarism," has the lowest score (M= 4.13; SD= .957). It revealed that seen that the number of respondents who showed they strongly disagree with the fifth item. It means that the students understand the meaning of plagiarism but they cannot prevent the act of plagiarism.

### 2. The Results on Plagiarism Knowledge Aspect

Many students need to learn more such knowledge about plagiarism. The result on plagiarism knowledge aspect can be seen in table 3.

**Table 3.** Results on Plagiarism Knowledge Aspect

No	Questionnaire	Mean	Std. Deviation
7	I had session on plagiarism when I started my time in this university	3.80	1.199
6	I know that there are different types of plagiarism	3.39	1.131
8	My university has a law about plagiarism	3.37	1.029
9	There is no sanction for plagiarism in my university	1.93	1.114

Table 3 above shows that item 7, "I had a session on plagiarism when I started my time in this university," has the highest score (M= 3.80; SD= 1.199). It revealed that the number of respondents who showed they strongly agree with the seventh item. It means that most of them in their university had classes on plagiarism for their papers. In addition, the data also revealed that the respondents agree that they know different types of plagiarism. It is in line with Rodhiya et al. (2020) that most students need a basic understanding of the various types

of plagiarism that lead to unintentional plagiarism. With those varied types of plagiarism, teaching students what plagiarism is, why plagiarism should be avoided, and how to avoid plagiarism is of urgent agenda to be included in teaching. It means that students mostly do plagiarism due to the limitation of knowledge about plagiarism and how to write academic writing. As stated by Sureda et. al., (2015) that plagiarism sometimes happens unconsciously in writing because students do not have enough knowledge about citing and referencing books and journals.

However, Item 9, "There is no sanction of plagiarism in my university," has the lowest score (M= 1.93; SD= 1.114). It can be seen from the number of respondents who showed they strongly disagree with the ninth item. It means they know that when they commit plagiarism they are punished, but in this study does not impose strict sanctions so that the students still do it.

### 3. Results on Unknowingness Plagiarism

Unknowingness plagiarism becomes one of the factors that can cause plagiarism. The results on unknowingness plagiarism can be seen in table 4.

**Table 4.** Results on Unknowingness Plagiarism

No	Questionnaire	Mean	Std. Deviation
11	I do not know that there are different types of plagiarism	2.80	1.247
14	I am not aware if I plagiarized	2.79	1.126
10	I am not sure that plagiarism is unethical	1.85	1.200
12	I am not sure what plagiarism is	1.75	.894
13	I do not know that plagiarism is a form of cheating	1.72	.994

Table 4 above shows that item 11, "I do not know that there are different types of plagiarism," has the highest score (M= 2.80; SD= 1.247). It can be seen from the number of respondents who showed they strongly agree with the eleventh item. Besides they have class plagiarism, they also understand the meaning of plagiarism. In this study, the students only know the meaning of plagiarism not mastering the material, such as various types of plagiarism. As stated by Babalola (2012) that Deliberate plagiarism includes hiring other people to write a paper as their work, commonly called jockeys, and includes references that were not written down in their paper. It indicates that understanding plagiarism may vary due to many reasons. Students may be aware of plagiarism, but to what extent plagiarism is committed remain a problem. In writing classes, for example, students understand that they are not allowed to copy their classmates' work. However, the limitation of how something is called an act of plagiarism may need to be better understood. This behavior can be avoided through intellectual theft by confiscating sources and searching the most recent sources (Cooper, 2016). Students are expected never to use the jockeys as tools in their papers.

In addition, item 13, "I do not know that plagiarism is a form of cheating" has the lowest score (M= 1.72; SD= .994). It can be seen from the number of respondents who showed they strongly disagree with the thirteenth item. It means that in this study, the students should know plagiarism is part of a form of fraud.

#### 4. Results on the Acceptability of Plagiarism

Pecorari & Petrić (2014) stated that there are some factors behind the act of plagiarism. First, students might think that it is acceptable to taking someone's word as long as they have similar ideas, secondly, the number of tasks that students have are mostly substantial which lead them to do the plagiarism, the pressure to collect assignments on time and fears of being sanctioned if students are late submitting the task is the next factor that affects plagiarism. The last factor is because students might not be familiar with the topic being discussed and lack of grammatical rules of the language. In other words, these results prove that students do plagiarism intentionally. The results on the acceptability of plagiarism can be seen in table 5.

**Table 5.** Results on The Acceptability of Plagiarism

No	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
18	I am aware of doing plagiarism	2.93	1.022
15	I am not sure I can avoid plagiarism in my writing	2.81	1.112
16	Everybody is doing plagiarism	2.60	1.070
19	I just dare to plagiarize even though I know it's wrong	1.81	1.010
17	Plagiarism is nothing wrong	1.78	.949

Based on table 5 above shows that item 18, "I am aware of doing plagiarism," has the highest score ( $M= 2.93$ ;  $SD= 1.022$ ). It can be seen from the number of respondents who showed they strongly agree with the eighteenth item. It means that the students feel aware when they plagiarism because they know plagiarism is the wrong action. In addition, to know students who commit plagiarism consciously or intentionally, and some did it unconsciously or unintentionally. unintentional plagiarism, often arising from ignorance of citation and reference rules. These include copying verbatim from print or electronic sources without acknowledging the source (Babalola, 2012). However, this action is considered unintentional or not a violation for someone who commits plagiarism spontaneously or unconsciously (Hussein, 2022).

Plagiarism occurs in life as a student because all papers need to be known where they come from when taking the quotation. Usually, students take these actions because there are several demands when they do their work. Several studies have shown that students perceive plagiarism as justified under heavy workload conditions (Ehrich et al., 2016). Therefore, fellow students accept the acceptability of plagiarism in universities. Students assume that plagiarism is permissible when they commit plagiarism because of a heavy workload. It is supported by the data, item 17, "Plagiarism is nothing wrong," has the lowest score ( $M= 1.78$ ;  $SD= .949$ ). It can be seen from the number of respondents who showed they strongly disagree with the seventeenth item. It means plagiarism is one of the wrong actions and harms others. However, plagiarism in any way is considered not allowed. Plagiarism is still plagiarism. Unless they reasoned forgot to write references or sources. They can find the source again or delete the source they wrote.

Generally, in universities, especially in Indonesia, the sanction for someone who commits plagiarism is to have their degree revoked. Someone who committed plagiarism and the title degree given was declared invalid and revoked by the university (Panjaitan, 2017). As it is known, it is difficult to avoid this fraudulent act because the perpetrator should have a reason why they did this action. Many factors cause plagiarism among students. The following factors caused plagiarism: student pressure, inadequate time management, poor research

skills, and ignorance of plagiarism (Yi et al., 2020). Student awareness needs to learn about writing citation style, anti-plagiarism regulations, and plagiarism penalties. The lack of knowledge about plagiarism, the cause of student behavior tendencies, and did not understand of the seriousness of the violation; therefore, plagiarism continued to increase.

#### 5. Results on Attitude towards Plagiarism

Investigating students' attitude towards plagiarism plays crucial role in increasing students' awareness of plagiarism. The results on attitude towards plagiarism can be seen in Table 6.

**Table 6. Results on Attitude Towards Plagiarism**

No	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
21	I feel good when plagiarizing	4.17	1.121
20	It hurts no one	1.63	1.000
22	I feel worried if I plagiarize	1.56	.915

Table 6 shows that item 21, "I feel good when plagiarizing," has the highest score (M= 4.17; SD= 1.121). It can be seen from the number of respondents who showed they strongly agree with the twenty-one items. It means, the students feel okay when doing plagiarism because they had pressure from anywhere. Then, the pressure such as from teachers or lecturers, university, pressure to get a high score, short time deadlines, et so that they should do it. However, item 22, "I feel worried if I plagiarize," has the lowest score (M= 1.56; SD= .915). It can be seen from the number of respondents who showed they strongly disagree with the twenty-two items. It means that most students are worried when they commit this fraudulent act, which means they are worried about the negative impact that occurs.

The data above is supported by Prihantini & Indudewi (2016) that many acts of plagiarism carried out by students reduced the value of academic integrity and negatively affected other students who did not take these actions. Therefore, knowing students' understanding of plagiarism and what factors encourage it is necessary. As students, sometimes they realize that plagiarism is wrong, but they may have demands to do the assignments given. There are several reasons for plagiarism to occur, namely lack of knowledge about how to cite and reference, their inability to cope with workloads and short deadlines, pressure to get good grades, lack of motivation to excel, laziness, and cultural factors (Babalola, 2012).

Related to the problem above, the students can avoid plagiarism with a used quote and paraphrasing the sentences. Students can also use free and paid plagiarism checkers such as Turnitin, SmallSeoTools, and other plagiarism checkers available on the Web. However, academic precautions such as building a culture that plagiarism is shameful. Finally, students can use the plagiarism test service anywhere. As it is known, there are many types and differences in plagiarism.

#### D. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to identify Indonesian undergraduate students' perception of plagiarism in an academic reading and writing class. Plagiarism would be the biggest problem in the papers if they did it. The results indicate that most of the students in this study have different understandings of plagiarism. In academic reading and writing classes, they understand plagiarism. They should include a quote or paraphrase to avoid plagiarism. In that class, there is a special meeting about plagiarism, with this class helps students avoid plagiarism. In the plagiarism class, they learn how to write citations, paraphrase, and references.

Although they learn all about plagiarism, some do it intentionally or unintentionally. Unintentional plagiarism, such as needing to understand the rules of writing citations and references, often occurs. In contrast, plagiarism is intentional; the students have pressure from anywhere, such as short assignment deadlines and demands to get good grades—some solutions to reduce these actions are using several online applications to check plagiarism for free. In conclusion, plagiarism is an unethical act that can harm many people. When a student copies their friend's answer, it will harm both of them, such as reducing their value in academics or declining academic integrity.

Regarding the results of this study, further research and deeper study of this area are highly recommended, especially for international students, as students are expected to understand the rules regarding copyright and intellectual property rights in academic writing. Ensure that students are well taught in reading comprehension and techniques of paraphrasing, summarizing, use of synonyms, and different reference conventions. Teachers need to provide information about plagiarism, warning plagiarism, and encourage students to try to avoid plagiarism.

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