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Evaluative Study of Plagiarism in Post Graduate Research in Punjab, Pakistan

Abstract

The purpose of the present study is to highlight the seriousness and explore the level of awareness of postgraduate students regarding plagiarism, HEC plagiarism policy and practice. The research design used in the study was convergent mixed method. The population of the study was comprised of all the postgraduate students and supervisors of the public sector universities of Punjab. The sample of this study consisted of 64 supervisor and 272 postgraduate students from Punjab. Three research instruments; questionnaires, semi-structured interview and focus group discussion guidelines (FGDs) were used to collect the data. The results of the study indicated that students were aware about plagiarism but unaware of the plagiarism policy except that the similarity index of the dissertation. Study recommends arranging awareness about plagiarism to the teachers, students and administrators through orientations, various workshops, trainings and seminars.

Key Words: Awareness, Plagiarism, Post Graduate, Research, Similarity.

Introduction

The basis of educational world turns around ethics and integrity, here the new ideas, theories and philosophies emerged, which later on confirmed, re-confirmed and counter argued. All the ideas and theories used for the betterment of society through publications with the dire need of acknowledgement. Educational institutions serve the above said purpose through creating innovative ideas and theories along with producing highly competent graduates. Such graduates are ethically sound and professionally honest, ready to serve the society. It is essential to acknowledge revolutionary inventors and creator of novel ideas. The upcoming generation will get benefit from such creations and it is their ethical duty to acknowledge them as these as intellectual property rights. If someone does not acknowledge either intentionally or unintentionally the ideas or theories of others, he/she may indulge in plagiarism ([Ramzan et al., 2012](#)). Plagiarism is a failure and misuse of source material. It is commonly described as stealing others' ideas and presenting them as one's own thoughts (Arce [Espinoza & Monge Najera, 2015](#); [Kayaoglu et al., 2016](#)). Copying material, ideas, one's own published work, submitting the work of others, with one's own name, patent material without legal permission, reorganizing other ideas and claiming his own work, quotation without inverted commas and provide incomplete information about the source is the act of plagiarism.

The 'Government' controls the policies of regulatory authorities for higher education in Pakistan, such as the Higher Education Commission. There is a dire need to update the plagiarism policies and rules in various academic institutions – schools, colleges and universities that promote principles in students to create genuine work and to realize the importance of intellectual property. Educational institution, governing bodies and publishers agree that plagiarism is punishable crime over the globe. The concerned authorities are now paying attention to prevent the unfair data and plagiarized writings to be published in the research papers. Plagiarism policy is a measure and a tool for preventing plagiarism; whereas they focus to improve academic writing skills and awareness for reducing unintentionally plagiarism ([Wasay & Siddiqui, 2015](#)).

In plagiarism policy the Higher Education Commissions (HEC) of Pakistan has. discussed the penalties for teachers and students for minimizing or reducing plagiarism. . Minor penalties are

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implemented in the case if someone copies a home task assignment and major penalties will be imposed if someone copies the published work of others. If people habitually plagiarize others' work without proper acknowledgement, they faced penalties. In the case of major penalties the offender (teacher/researcher) may be dismissed from job, black listed, not capable for employment in future and their names are publicized on various electronic and print media. . Moderate penalties are also implemented on the researchers in the case of copying the main results without acknowledgment. Moderate penalties may include the demotions of the offender in the previous lower grade. The minor penalties are imposed if someone copies certain paragraphs without acknowledgment. The said penalties include issuing warning letter, the freezing of the research grants and canceled the supervision of PhDs. If the postgraduate students involved in plagiarism, they may be expelled from the university, get less grades, pay fine, written warning, and withdraw the student from MS, PhD degrees. The students who involved in plagiarism their names may be published in print and electronic media or some other penalties are imposed by the plagiarism standing committee and the further actions if needed as per HEC plagiarism policy. Students have no clear understanding about the concept and definition of plagiarism according plagiarism policy addressed ([Bruton & Childers, 2016](#); [Gullifer & Tyson, 2014](#)).

Current study gives evidence about the level of students' awareness about plagiarism. Plagiarism is a serious breach of academic integrity as it detracts from the value of original and honest students research work. This study encourages the policy-makers and academic staff to acknowledge the concerns about implementation of plagiarism policy at the post graduate level. Collaborative, cross-disciplinary re-thinking of plagiarism is needed to reach the workable solutions. Findings of this study may be beneficial for the university teachers to guide their students for improving quality of their research work by avoiding plagiarism.

Review of Literature

The phenomenon of academic dishonesty is a well-known problem. It is clash between the prevailing practices of post graduate students and the principles of educational system because of the developed technologies and methods available on internet; it also changes in students' attitude. Students develop strategies according to the new technologies ([Colnerud & Rosander, 2009](#); [Heckler & Forde, 2015](#)). In various higher education institutions, the academic honesty is claimed .a fundamental principle to direct .the academic activities, and to provide guidelines for academic honesty; it is supposed to increase the moral development and character of the learner. The higher education institutions provide academically integrated environment to the students which requires the students to contribute in a society having moral accountability. The institutions equip the students to be the ethical citizens of the world ([Morris, 2018](#)).

Plagiarism is a subset of academic dishonesty that has been steadily increased at the postgraduate level due to its easy access to educational materials available on the internet and poor academic writing skills ([Lahiry & Sinha, 2019](#)). In the early 17th century, plagiarism was derived to the Latin word "*plagiarius*", which means kidnappers or burglars, because in ancient times there were pirates who sometimes stole children. Plagiarism allegations are a way to discredit a competitor, even though they have the potential ([Shirazi et al., 2010](#)). Plagiarism is stealing the work of others and presenting it with their own name. Most people take it as a copy of a work of others or lend it to someone else. Though, the terms like "copy" and "steal" can hide the seriousness of the crime. The plagiarism has been increased multifarious and is reflected to be a discredit for theses at doctoral level and academic degrees at university level ([Jones & Sheridan, 2015](#)). Copy from the one source is the place where the student uses any of the subsequent as the basis for the whole or a significant part of the assignments. Copy a published book, a published article, from internet. Steal a piece of work submitted by another student for a similar or earlier assignment. Although plagiarism work is not new, the preparation of ready-made content through internet and the information explosion in certain areas have produced the feeling that students are making widespread use of copy and paste the material ([Anney & Mosha, 2015](#)).

There are numerous other conditions which depict the plagiarized work. Write or transcribe a small piece of writing from the source verb, without citing the original author. Translate the content

into a different language and then in the real author. Add content without quoting the real author. Modifications are made in the writing to change the structure of the sentences. They replace the words. Students used different synonyms. They also used addition or deletions of words. Read multiple contents and convert their text into new contents that is same with the original text ([Morris, 2018](#)).

The students have made a variety of plagiarism kinds i.e. photocopier writer, a self-plagiarism, poorly concealed, sluggishness, switch wording, use of metaphor, stolen data, replicate, find and replace, reproduce ([Meo & Talha, 2019](#)). These kinds of plagiarism are being adept by the students at post graduate level. The most common practice of plagiarism is to steal someone else's ideas, copy content, use unpublished content, self-reference, copy the work of their colleagues, re-submit prior work, and easy access of paper mills. There are illegal sources available online. The plagiarism practices varied in various institutions because of numerous reasons such as lack of students' interest, less ethical responsibility, communication gaps, lack of confidence, lazy students and lack of writing skills, insufficient words and language barrier ([Wasay & Siddiqui, 2015](#)). Plagiarism is serious academic misconduct and a commonly discussed topic in higher education. So, to build a solid foundation for high academic standards and best practices at a graduate university, aspects of plagiarism are reviewed to develop better management processes for reducing plagiarism ([Levine & Pazdemik, 2018](#)).

Teachers and administration do not tolerate plagiarism at higher education level either intentionally or unintentionally. It is also known as an immoral and illegal attempt and violation of rules, regulations and policies that are often used to achieve the requirements of the students, just like higher grades in academics ([Bloomfield et al., 2016](#); [Casey et al., 2018](#)). Mainly, there are two major kinds of plagiarism, namely, intentional and unintentional. Unintentional plagiarism known as unconsciously do not acknowledging the work, ideas and words of others. This contains accidentally failing to accurately citing the original sources, not citing the source of rephrased material, inaccurate paraphrasing, they used paper mills and by or purchase research papers ([Cheema et al., 2011](#)). Conversely, intentional plagiarism includes knowingly copying others work and show it's their own work. This includes purchasing ready-made papers from paper mill, copy and paste material directly without quotation marks or without appropriate rephrasing and not citing the original writer or stealing other researchers' ideas ([Sarwar et al., 2016](#)).

Scholars claim to understand the concept of plagiarism but they have little knowledge how to prevent it. They need clear information of the concept of plagiarism, proper timely training, reinforcing and time management, information skills, with in the context of their own subject ([Okere et al., 2017](#)). It is the responsibility of the institution and the teacher to provide students clear guidelines and policy for dealing students who are involved in academic dishonesty. Teachers should inform their students about it during orientation of the course, make them realize .that it is academic dishonesty and inform them the consequences of plagiarism. Lectures should be designed regarding awareness about plagiarism. Assignment must be changed every year. Teachers should check their assignment with similarity index software and provide them marks at separate stage ([Obeid & Hill, 2017](#)).

Methodology

The aim of the study was to explore the awareness of post graduate students about the concept of plagiarism, plagiarism policy and practice. The aforementioned purpose was gained by the perception of the supervisors and the students from public sector universities of Punjab. Both qualitative and quantitative research approaches were instantaneously applied by using convergent mixed-methods research design in order to achieve the said purpose ([Collins et al., 2007](#); [Tayraukham, 2009](#)).

The population of the study comprised .all the supervisors and the post graduate students of public sector universities of Punjab. Multistage sampling technique was used to select the sample. At the 1st stage four public universities were randomly selected from Punjab. Two universities were selected from central Punjab due to vast populated area as compare to southern and northern Punjab. One university selected from southern and one from northern Punjab. At the 2nd stage, four

departments were selected from each selected university considering the representation of all major disciplines such as Department of English (Faculty of Arts), Department of Business Administration (Faculty of Management Sciences), Department of Chemistry (Faculty of Science) and Department of Education from (Faculty of Social Science). At the 3rd stage through purposive sampling technique, 64 HEC approved supervisors four from each selected department and 272 post graduate (MPhil and PhD) students, 17 from each department were selected as respondents of the study.

Three research instruments were developed, questionnaires for supervisors & for post graduate students, semi-structured interview schedule for supervisors and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) guidelines for the post graduate students, to explore the awareness of post graduate students regarding plagiarism. The validity of the instrument was ensured by discussing it with the panel of experts, suggestions by the experts the questions in the tools were revised, merged and deleted accordingly. The reliability of the questionnaire was calculated by the researcher through employing Cronbach Alpha. The reliability value was 0.89, which showed the higher level of internal consistency of the tools.

Results

The analysis of the data was consisted on two sections: quantitative data analysis and qualitative data analysis. The quantitative data were analyzed by using descriptive (percentages, mean, SD) with the using of SPSS latest version. In the second section the qualitative data were analyzed by using thematic analysis technique.

Part I – Quantitative Data

Table 1. Awareness about Plagiarism- Supervisors

S. No	Item	SD	D	SD+D	N	A	SA	$\frac{A+S}{A}$	\bar{x}	SD
1.	Copy content without reference	3.1	7.8	10.9	6.3	25.0	57.8	82.8	4.27	1.09
2.	Copy ideas without reference	4.7	14.1	18.8	7.8	32.8	40.6	73.4	3.91	1.22
3.	Use of one's own published work without acknowledging	3.1	9.4	12.5	4.7	25.0	57.8	82.8	4.25	1.11
4.	Submit others work, as one's own	3.1	1.6	4.7	10.9	20.3	64.1	84.4	4.41	0.97
5.	Copy the content without permission	7.8	14.1	21.9	10.9	18.8	48.4	67.2	3.86	1.37
6.	Copy ideas from multiple sources in paragraph without acknowledgment	7.8	20.3	28.1	12.5	25.0	34.4	59.4	3.58	1.35
7.	Not quotation in inverted commas	6.3	20.3	26.6	14.1	23.4	35.9	59.4	3.63	1.33
8.	Providing incomplete information about the sources	3.1	10.9	14.1	9.4	42.2	34.4	76.6	3.94	1.08
9.	Awareness about plagiarism policy of HEC	4.7	12.5	17.2	14.1	32.8	35.9	68.8	3.83	1.19
10.	Knowledge about consequences of plagiarism	6.3	9.4	15.6	10.9	42.2	31.3	73.4	3.83	1.16
11.	Plagiarism deals as a	3.1	4.7	7.8	9.4	50.0	32.8	82.8	4.05	0.95

serious problem										
12.	University discouraged plagiarism	3.1	12.5	15.6	12.5	46.9	25.0	71.9	3.78	1.06
13.	Report to authorities about the students who commit plagiarism	7.8	15.6	23.4	20.3	34.4	21.9	56.3	3.47	1.22
14.	Plagiarism is taken as a course	6.3	20.3	26.6	9.4	39.1	25.0	64.1	3.56	1.25
15.	Discussion on plagiarism in the classroom.	3.1	17.2	20.3	10.9	46.9	21.9	68.8	3.67	1.10
Total		4.89	12.7	17.6	10.9	33.6	37.8	71.47	3.87	1.16

All values are in percentage, mean score 1, 2 and 3 reflects no awareness and above 3 shows awareness Table 1 shows the perceptions of the supervisors regarding awareness of students about plagiarism. It is evident from the perception of supervisors that 82.8 % students cognizant that ‘copy content without reference’ is plagiarism. 73.4% students aware that ‘copy ideas without reference’ is plagiarism. 82.8% the supervisor stated that ‘use of one’s own published work without acknowledging’; 84.4% students aware that ‘submit others work, as one’s own’; 67.2 % students aware that ‘copy the content without permission’; 59.4 % students cognizant that ‘copy ideas from multiple sources in paragraph without acknowledgment’; 59.4% the students admitted that ‘no quotation in inverted commas’ is plagiarism; 76.6% the students stated that ‘Providing incomplete information about the sources’; is an act of plagiarism.

It is evident that 68.8 % supervisors viewed that students have ‘awareness about plagiarism policy of HEC’; 73.4 % students have knowledge about the consequences of plagiarism in research work.

The supervisors stated that 82.8% students aware that ‘plagiarism deals as a serious problem’; 71.9 % students cognizant that ‘university discouraged plagiarism’; 56.3 % students aware that ‘report to authorities about the students who commit plagiarism’; 64.1 % students support that ‘plagiarism is taught as a course’; 68.8 % students authenticate that ‘discussion on plagiarism in the classroom’ is the policy practice of plagiarism. Overall 71.47 % supervisors viewed that the students are aware about plagiarism.

Table 2. Awareness about Plagiarism - Students

S.No	Item	SD	D	SD+D	N	A	SA	A+SA	\bar{x}	SD
1.	Copy content without reference	7.4	9.3	16.7	7.4	31.6	44.2	75.8	3.96	1.25
2.	Copy ideas without reference	9.7	20.4	30.1	8.6	30.5	30.9	61.3	3.52	1.36
3.	Use of one’s own published work without acknowledging	10.0	19.0	29.0	17.5	25.3	28.3	53.5	3.43	1.34
4.	Submit others work, as one’s own	6.7	9.3	16.0	8.2	27.1	48.7	75.8	4.02	1.24
5.	Copy the content without permission	3.3	7.4	10.8	17.8	29.7	41.6	71.4	3.99	1.09
6.	Copy ideas from multiple sources in	5.2	20.8	26.0	12.3	32.3	29.4	61.7	3.60	1.25

7.	paragraph without acknowledgment Not quotation in inverted commas	11.2	17.1	28.3	19.0	24.5	28.3	52.8	3.42	1.35
8.	Providing incomplete information about the sources	3.7	12.6	16.4	16.0	39.0	28.6	67.7	3.76	1.11
9.	Awareness about plagiarism policy of HEC	6.7	17.1	23.8	14.5	35.3	26.4	61.7	3.58	1.23
10.	Knowledge about consequences of plagiarism	5.9	13.0	19.0	15.6	43.5	21.9	65.4	3.62	1.14
11.	Plagiarism deals as a serious problem	2.2	14.5	16.7	13.0	42.0	28.3	70.3	3.80	1.08
12.	University discouraged plagiarism	5.6	15.6	21.2	11.5	38.3	29.0	67.3	3.70	1.20
13.	Report to authorities about the students who commit plagiarism	6.7	14.9	21.6	23.4	34.2	20.8	55.0	3.48	1.17
14.	Plagiarism is taken as a course	19.3	22.7	42.0	14.5	26.8	16.7	43.5	2.99	1.39
15.	Discussion on plagiarism in the classrooms	9.7	15.2	24.9	12.3	35.7	27.1	62.8	3.55	1.30
Total		7.55	15.26	22.83	14.11	33.05	30.01	63.07	3.63	1.23

All values are in percentage, mean score 1, 2 and 3 reflects no awareness and above 3 shows awareness Table 2 shows the perceived awareness of students about plagiarism. It is evident that 75.8 % the students agree that 'copy content without reference'; 61.3% students viewed that 'copy ideas without reference'; 53.5% Post Graduate students confirm that 'use of one's own published work without acknowledging'; 75.8% the students authenticate that 'submit others work, as one's own'; 71.4 % students aware that 'copy the content without permission'; 61.7 % the students support that 'copy ideas from multiple sources in paragraph without acknowledgment'; 52.8% students admitted that 'not quotation in inverted commas'; 67.7% the students stated that 'providing incomplete information about the sources'; is an act of plagiarism.

It is evident that 61.7 % students agree that 'awareness about plagiarism policy of HEC'; 65.4% the students cognizant about 'consequences of plagiarism'.

The values in the table indicate that 70.3% the students perceive that 'plagiarism deals as a serious problem'; 67.3 % students were aware of that 'university discouraged plagiarism'; 55.0 % students view that 'report to authorities about the students who commit plagiarism'; 43.5 % students support that 'plagiarism is taken as a course'; 62.8 % students authenticate that 'discussion on plagiarism in the classrooms'. Overall 63.07 % the students stated that the students are aware about practices regarding plagiarism policy.

Table 3. Awareness about Plagiarism- Supervisors & Students

Item	SD	D	SD+D	N	A	SA	A+SA	Mean	SD
1. Copy content without reference	6.6	9.0	15.6	7.2	30.3	46.8	77.2	4.02	1.22
2. Copy ideas without reference	8.7	19.2	27.9	8.4	30.9	32.7	63.7	3.60	1.34
3. Use of one's own published work without acknowledging	8.7	17.1	25.8	15.0	25.2	33.9	59.2	3.59	1.34
4. Submit others work, as one's own	6.0	7.8	13.8	8.7	26.1	51.4	77.5	4.09	1.20
5. Copy the content without permission	4.2	8.7	12.9	16.5	27.6	42.9	70.6	3.96	1.15
6. Copy ideas from multiple sources in paragraph without acknowledgment	5.7	20.7	26.4	12.3	30.9	30.3	61.3	3.59	1.27
7. Not quotation in inverted commas	10.2	17.7	27.9	18.0	24.3	29.7	54.1	3.46	1.35
8. Providing incomplete information about the sources	3.6	12.3	15.9	14.7	39.6	29.7	69.4	3.80	1.11
9. Awareness about plagiarism policy of HEC	6.3	16.2	22.5	14.4	34.8	28.2	63.1	3.62	1.23
10. Knowledge about consequences of plagiarism	6.0	12.3	18.3	14.7	43.2	23.7	67.0	3.66	1.14
11. Plagiarism deals as a serious problem	2.4	12.6	15.0	12.3	43.5	29.1	72.7	3.84	1.06
12. University discouraged plagiarism	5.1	15.0	20.1	11.7	39.9	28.2	68.2	3.71	1.17
13. Report to authorities about the students who commit plagiarism	6.9	15.0	21.9	22.8	34.2	21.0	55.3	3.47	1.18
14. Plagiarism is taken as a course	16.8	22.2	39.0	13.5	29.1	18.3	47.4	3.10	1.38
15. Discussion on plagiarism in the classrooms	8.4	15.6	24.0	12.0	37.8	26.1	64.0	3.58	1.26
Total	7.04	14.76	21.80	13.48	33.16	31.47	64.71	3.67	1.23

All values are in percentage, mean score 1, 2 and 3 reflects no awareness and above 3 shows awareness Table 3 shows the perceived awareness of supervisor and students about plagiarism. It is evident that 77.2 % the students agree that 'copy content without reference'; 63.7% 'copy ideas without reference'; 59.2% the students confirm that 'use of one's own published work without acknowledging'; 77.5% the students state that 'submit others work, as one's own'; 70.6 % the students favor that 'copy the content without permission'; 61.3 % the students support that 'copy ideas from multiple sources in paragraph without acknowledgment'; 54.1% students aware that 'not

quotation in inverted commas'; 69.4% the students stated that 'providing incomplete information about the sources'; is an act of plagiarism.

The supervisors viewed regarding students awareness about plagiarism policy that 63.1 % students agree that students have 'awareness about plagiarism policy of HEC'; 67.0% the students view that 'knowledge about consequences of plagiarism'. 72.7% students affirm that 'plagiarism deals as a serious problem'; 68.2 % students state that 'university discouraged plagiarism'; 55.3 % students authenticate that 'report to authorities about the students who commit plagiarism'; 47.4 % the students support that 'plagiarism is taken as a course'; 64.0 % the students authenticate that 'discussion on plagiarism in the classrooms'. The mean score of all indicators (3.67) showed that the supervisors and the students state that the students are aware about plagiarism.

Part II – Qualitative Data

In this part researcher collected data through the interviews of the supervisors and focus group discussions guidelines (FGDs) of the post graduate students are analyzed and presented hereunder.

Student's Awareness about Plagiarism Through Interviews

Majority of supervisors from the universities, were of the view that the students were sufficiently aware of the concept and implications of plagiarism in recent years particularly those who were on the thesis writing phase. One of the supervisors said:

"The teachers check similarity index of student's assignments particularly at MPhil and PhD level, through Turnitin. The results of similarity index are discussed with the students. So, the students are well-aware regarding the concept of plagiarism".

Conversely, some of the supervisors narrated that students were unaware about the true concept of plagiarism. The students just understand that the similarity of the manuscript is plagiarism and overlook other types of it. One of the respondents viewed that

"The majority of the students, are not cognizant with the real concept of plagiarism. They think that just avoiding similarity index which should not exceed from 20% is all about avoiding plagiarism. To avoid it, they rephrase the content taken from the work of others, however, in fact, the rephrasing of content, or to steal other's ideas, is itself plagiarism".

Student's Awareness about University Plagiarism Policy through Interviews

The supervisors said that the students were aware with the university plagiarism policy to a larger extent. In many of the universities the students are informed about the plagiarism policy through their teachers during course work and by their supervisors at thesis writing stage. In some universities, workshops, orientation classes and seminars held by the departments to give awareness to the students about plagiarism, its policy and consequences. One of the supervisors stated that:

"The most of the students are completely aware with the plagiarism policy. Teachers told the students about plagiarism policy during the course work. The related supervisors also informed the students about plagiarism policy during the thesis work".

On the other hand, some of the supervisors viewed that the students were not aware with the plagiarism policy of the university. One among them stated that

"The students are not aware with the university plagiarism policy because they had no forum to get information about the policy."

The supervisors monotonously narrated that the students are not aware with the university plagiarism policy. Some of them said that they themselves were unfamiliar about it. One of them viewed that:

"The teachers do not have much awareness about plagiarism policy because the plagiarism check system is centralized in the university. The chief librarian checked the plagiarism of students' research work. That is why, the teachers are not much information about university policy of plagiarism, students had no awareness about university plagiarism policy. They just consider that similarity index in research work should not greater than 19%".

Plagiarism Policy Implementation through Interviews

Majority of the supervisors stated that HEC plagiarism policy is implemented in the university. They also viewed that the similarity index report is an essential part of the plagiarism policy, nonetheless, it is not all about the policy. One section of the supervisors viewed that similarity index report is attached with the thesis submission file which shows that plagiarism policy is the part of university practices.

On the other hand, few of the supervisors said that there is no proper implementation of the university plagiarism policy. In addition, the university does not endorse any penalty against the students who committed plagiarism.

Student's Awareness about Plagiarism through FGD

Majority of the students viewed that plagiarism as copy and paste content from the work of other researchers without proper acknowledgement. They also said that stealing the ideas of others, either from a research work or an online source, as the act of plagiarism. One of the MPhil students viewed that:

"Plagiarism is copying the material from any theses, article or an online source and pasting it in one's own thesis without referencing is plagiarism".

Alongside, a considerable number of the students viewed that the similarity of a research work with someone others work was the act of plagiarism only.

However, some of them stated that plagiarism is an unlawful activity, it is a crime, and illegal act. One of the MPhil students said that:

"Plagiarism is just a crime; it is an offense and illicit act which must be severely punished by the higher authorities".

University Plagiarism Policy through FGD

Maximum number of students viewed that they were not aware with the university plagiarism policy. They also stated that they have no source of information about plagiarism. They are just familiar with that 19% similarity index, was permitted by the university in students research work according to the university plagiarism policy. One of the MPhil students narrated that:

"Students are not fully aware with the university plagiarism policy. They just knew that university allow 19% plagiarism in thesis work, according to the policy.

On the other hand, a reasonable number of the students said that they were aware with the university plagiarism policy. One of the PhD students answered that:

"Yes, the students are familiar with the university plagiarism policy because their supervisors told them to read this policy from HEC website, so the students had studied it deeply".

Conclusion

The objectives of the study were to explore the awareness of the students about plagiarism, its policy and practices. The perceptions of the supervisors and the Post graduate students reflected that the students who were involved in the research work, after completion their course work were aware but not in its true letter and spirit regarding plagiarism. Most of the students think plagiarism as a similarity index. The students have the perception only to write their thesis in such a way that 19 % similarity index must be maintain. Students just know that the plagiarism (which is actually similarity index) of their dissertations should not exceed from 19% according to plagiarism policy of the university. Furthermore, the students were not much aware about the plagiarism policy as well as its practices. It is concluded that supervisors and post graduate students were in favor that university plagiarism policy is effective/ helpful in preventing plagiarism. It is also concluded that students are not aware of the steps taken by the university to reduce plagiarism. However, some steps were found as universities reject the thesis having plagiarism. Universities are organizing seminars on the awareness of plagiarism now days. Some universities considered attempts of plagiarism reports generated by Tuntin and gave them weightage in the assessment of thesis. Teachers were faced cases like stop promotion, ban on their research work or cancel publications.

Supervisors guided the students at day first about research work. Supervisors claimed that the university has properly implemented plagiarism policy given by the HEC.

Discussion

The purpose of the study was to examine the awareness of students about plagiarism, its policy and practices. The supervisors and the students affirmed that the students are aware about plagiarism, its policy and practices. [Maxwell et al. \(2008\)](#) conducted a study about awareness of plagiarism in Australian context. It was found from the results of the study that the students who were working on or accomplished their projects had better awareness about plagiarism and taken plagiarism as a serious activity. While, the students who were not at the stage of project completion have comparatively less awareness regarding plagiarism. [Dawson and Overfield \(2006\)](#) investigated that the students have cognizant about the bad effects of plagiarism but the students had no awareness about the consequences of plagiarism and did not know how to avoid it. It was found that the teachers play their role to make aware the students about plagiarism. The teachers should observe the students and advise them to avoid plagiarism. The students also used the internet sources for knowledge not for cheating. [Ramzan et al. \(2012\)](#) conducted a study in Pakistani context, it is reflected that the students have less awareness regarding plagiarism.

Recommendations

So, in this regards it is recommended that the training, seminars should be organized for the teachers and the students at post graduate level in universities regarding awareness of plagiarism, use of plagiarism detecting software. Students may be prepared and sensitized that plagiarism is crime, unethical and dishonesty and should overcome poor writing skills.

It is also recommended that workshops, seminars, and orientation sessions needed to organize for students that how they prevent their work from plagiarism, highlighted plagiarism penalties, demerits of plagiarism and effects of plagiarism on their future; provided competent supervisors; creative writing and English writing skills of the students needed to promote from college, BS and MA level. In addition, plagiarism should be checked in the assignments of the students; teachers should arrange classroom activities regarding plagiarism; plagiarism should be checked at departmental level.

Furthermore, ORIC needs to enhance effectiveness of their work as to deal with the plagiarism; QEC (Quality Enhancement Cell) took steps to prevent plagiarism; HEC circulations regarding plagiarism; and supervisors keep regular check and balance on students research work.

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