

Level of Knowledge, Attitude and Practices of Final Year Faculty of Technical and Vocational Education Students Towards Plagiarism

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ABSTRACT - Plagiarism is a major issue affecting academic integrity in higher education, particularly among students who frequently use digital resources in their learning. This study was conducted to assess the level of knowledge, attitudes, and practices of final-year students in the Faculty of Technical and Vocational Education regarding plagiarism. This study used a quantitative design with an online survey method. Respondents consisted of semester 6 and 7 students from four main programs: Agricultural Science, Invention Design, Technology Design, and Home Economics. A pilot study was conducted with 10 to 30 students to ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument, while the main study involved 150 respondents. Data were analyzed descriptively (mean and standard deviation) using SPSS software to describe respondent profiles and the distribution of students' knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to plagiarism. This study analyzes the level of knowledge, attitudes, and practices of final-year students in the Faculty of Technical and Vocational Education regarding plagiarism. Through a quantitative method with 150 respondents, the findings indicate that knowledge is at a high level (mean=3.81), attitude at a moderately high level (mean=3.62), while practices are at a moderate level (mean=3.01). The gap between knowledge and practice is identified to be influenced by academic pressure, time constraints, and access to digital resources. Based on student suggestions, an integrated approach encompassing ethics education (30.7%), enforcement (25.3%), technological support (23.3%), and time flexibility (20.7%) is needed to strengthen academic integrity. This study contributes to the development of holistic intervention strategies and serves as a guide for lecturers and university management in strengthening academic ethics in technical and vocational education.

INTRODUCTION

Plagiarism is one of the main issues in the education world, especially with technological advancements that make it easier for students to access information online. The ability to copy and modify others' work without proper attribution has become a major challenge to academic integrity globally (Foltýnek et al., 2021; Walker, 2020; Zaman et al., 2020). In the context of the Faculty of Technical and Vocational Education (FTV), students often face pressure to complete assignments within tight deadlines, which may tempt them to take shortcuts, including copying content from readily available sources. This issue not only

affects education quality but also undermines public trust in legitimate and credible academic outcomes. Therefore, this study was conducted to assess the level of knowledge, attitudes, and practices of final-year FTV students regarding plagiarism, with the hope of raising awareness about the importance of academic integrity among students.

Despite many efforts to increase awareness about plagiarism, this problem persists, especially among students who lack understanding of the negative impacts of plagiarism on their academic and professional careers (Spirgi et al., 2024; Raza et al., 2020; Based on preliminary studies, some students still engage in plagiarism unintentionally or due to a lack of understanding of writing ethics (Mutiaraningrum et al., 2022; Ahmad et al., 2024). This issue raises questions about the extent to which students truly understand the consequences of plagiarism and how they apply this knowledge in their academic practices. This study also aims to examine factors influencing plagiarism practices, such as academic pressure, lack of ethical awareness, and easy access to online information.

The main objectives of this study are to assess students' knowledge level about plagiarism, examine their attitudes toward this issue, and evaluate their actual practices in avoiding plagiarism. It is hoped that the findings of this study will provide a deeper understanding of plagiarism issues among FTV students and offer recommendations for improving academic integrity management in higher education institutions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

KAP Theory (Knowledge, Attitude, Practice)

In this study, the Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice (KAP) theory is used to examine students' behavior regarding plagiarism. This theory outlines that an individual's knowledge about an issue influences their attitude toward that issue, and this attitude ultimately influences their practice or behavior (Poorolajal et al., 2012; Shakeel et al., 2026). In the context of plagiarism, knowledge refers to students' understanding of what plagiarism is, the types of plagiarism, and the consequences of this practice in academic and professional settings (Magida et al., 2023; Clarke et al., 2023). Attitude refers to students' perception of plagiarism whether they view it as a serious violation or something relatively minor (Bettayeb et al., 2024). Practice refers to students' actual actions in avoiding or engaging in plagiarism while completing academic assignments (Rahman, Hossain & Uddin, 2024).

This theory provides a foundation for this study as it allows for an understanding of how strong knowledge about plagiarism does not necessarily lead to corresponding attitudes and practices, as well as how external factors such as academic pressure and easy access to online information can influence students' attitudes and practices.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework employed in this study involves three main variables that influence students' involvement in plagiarism: knowledge, attitude, and practice. This study assumes that students' level of knowledge about plagiarism directly influences their attitude toward the issue, and this attitude subsequently influences their practice in completing academic assignments.

Knowledge refers to students' understanding of what plagiarism is, its various forms, and the negative effects of plagiarism on their academic and professional careers (Mustapha et al., 2020; Rozar et al., 2020; Alzahrani et al., 2022). Attitude pertains to how students evaluate and judge plagiarism—whether they view it as a serious offense or merely a minor infraction (Foltýnek et al., 2021). Practice, in turn, refers to the actual behavior of students in avoiding or engaging in plagiarism, such as the appropriate use of quotations and accurate referencing in academic writing (Jenkins et al., 2022).

This framework also considers other factors that influence students' involvement in plagiarism, such as academic pressure (to complete assignments within short timeframes), easy access to digital sources (which facilitates the copying of information), and a lack of education and training regarding proper writing ethics (Suriani Zainuddin et al., 2021). Previous studies have shown that even when students possess good knowledge about plagiarism, a gap remains between their knowledge and actual practice due to these factors.

Through the KAP Theory and this conceptual framework, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding of how students' knowledge, attitude, and practice regarding plagiarism are interrelated. Figure 1 show the conceptual framework of this study.

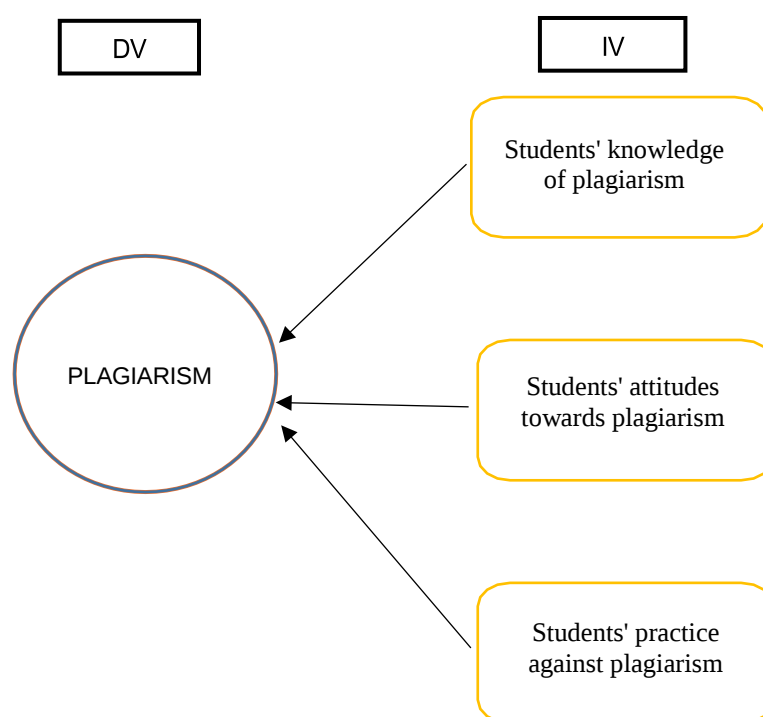


Figure 1. The framework diagram of how students' knowledge, attitude, and practice regarding plagiarism are interrelated.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

This study employs a quantitative approach with a descriptive research design to assess students' knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding plagiarism. The study involves the population of final-year students from the Faculty of Technical and Vocational (FTV) at Sultan Idris University of Education (UPSI), with a population of 220 students selected using the Krejcie & Morgan formula (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). The sampling technique chosen is simple random sampling. The target population of this study consists of final year students of the Faculty of Technical and Vocational who are currently pursuing semesters 6 and 7, covering four main programs: Agricultural Science, Design and Technological, Invention and Home Economics. A structured questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale was used as the research instrument to measure students' knowledge about plagiarism, their attitudes toward the issue, and their practices in academic writing.

Data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed to the respondents. The data collection procedure was conducted voluntarily and free from any form of pressure, with a pilot study carried out beforehand to ensure the questionnaire was easily understood. Data analysis was performed using SPSS software, where descriptive analysis was used to obtain basic statistics such as mean and standard deviation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Instrument Reliability

To determine the reliability of the study instrument, a pilot study was conducted on a similar population, namely final year students of the Faculty of Technical and Vocational. According to Azraii et al. (2021), instruments with a high reliability index show good consistency when used repeatedly against a group of respondents with similar characteristics. Based on the Cronbach Alpha analysis carried out, all three parts of the questionnaire showed acceptable reliability values. Part B (knowledge of plagiarism) recorded a value of $\alpha = 0.765$ for nine items, Part C (attitude towards plagiarism) recorded $\alpha = 0.755$ for six items, and Part D (plagiarism-related practices) showed $\alpha = 0.801$ for three items. These values exceed the minimum level of 0.70 recommended for social research (Dorsah, 2026), thus proving that the study instruments have satisfactory internal consistency. From the analysis conducted, it can be concluded that this study instrument has an acceptable level of reliability and is suitable for use for actual studies.

Demographic Characteristics

Table 1 shows the distribution of the study respondents by gender group. A total of 150 final- year students from the Faculty of Technical and Vocational participated in this study. The distribution of respondents was equal between male and female, where each gender group consisted of 75 respondents, representing 50.0% of the total number of respondents.

Most of the study respondents were in the age range of 21-25 years, with 135 respondents (90.0%). This was followed by the age group of 20 years with 8 respondents (5.3%), 26-29 years with 6 respondents (4.0%), and 30 years and above with 1 respondent (0.7%). These data also indicate that almost the entire study sample consisted of young people within the typical higher education age range. Most respondents consisted of year 4 students with 90 people (60.0%), while the rest were year 3 students with 60 people (40.0%).

Table 1. Respondents' profile

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	75	50.0%
Female	75	50.0%
Total	150	100%
Age		
20	8	5.3%
21-25	135	90.0%
26-29	6	4.0%
30	1	0.7%
Total	150	100%
Year of Study		
Year 3	60	40.0%
Year 4	90	60.0%
Total	150	100%

Analysis of Students' Knowledge Level Regarding Plagiarism

Overall, the level of knowledge among final-year students of the Faculty of Technical and Vocational regarding plagiarism is at a high level, with a mean score of 3.81 (Table 2). However, the varying standard deviations for each item indicate the existence of differences in understanding in certain aspects. Item B6 "I know that copying without referencing is wrong in terms of academic ethics" recorded the highest mean (3.93) and standard deviation (1.243), indicating strong agreement that copying without referencing is an ethical violation, while item B7 "I believe that copying information from the internet without citing the source remains unacceptable even if the sentences are slightly rephrased"

recorded the lowest mean (3.68) with the highest standard deviation (1.368), revealing a lack of consensus regarding the use of internet sources.

The analysis found that students have a good understanding of basic plagiarism concepts such as copying full paragraphs (B4 "Copying an entire paragraph from a source without citation is plagiarism", mean 3.75, SD 1.301) and the implications for academic reputation (B8 "I believe plagiarism has a negative impact on academic reputation, but most students do not think in that direction", mean 3.86, SD 1.285). However, confusion still exists regarding more subtle forms of plagiarism such as minor sentence modifications (B2 "I believe that minor changes to source sentences without attribution are still considered plagiarism in academic assignments", mean 3.73, SD 1.295) and copying reference formats (B3 "Copying the reference format (such as the order of names, year, and title) from an example without copying the content is considered plagiarism", mean 3.73, SD 1.187). Item B9 "I am aware that actions can be taken by the University against students involved in plagiarism, but such punishments are rarely enforced", with a mean of 3.91 and standard deviation of 1.215, shows that students are aware of possible disciplinary actions, but perceptions regarding the consistency of their implementation still vary.

Table 2. Descriptive Analysis of Students' Knowledge Level Regarding Plagiarism

Knowledge Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
B1- I am confident that every statement containing source citations without references is clearly plagiarism, even if not copied verbatim.	3.83	1.114
B2- I believe that minor changes to source sentences without attribution are still considered plagiarism in academic assignments.	3.73	1.295
B3- Copying the reference format (such as the order of names, year, and title) from an example without copying the content is considered plagiarism.	3.73	1.187
B4- Copying an entire paragraph from a source without citation is plagiarism.	3.75	1.301
B5- I change several words in a paragraph without adding references. This is plagiarism.	3.85	1.219
B6- I know that copying without referencing is wrong in terms of academic ethics.	3.93	1.243
B7- I believe that copying information from the internet without citing the source remains unacceptable even if the sentences are slightly rephrased.	3.68	1.368
B8- I believe plagiarism has a negative impact on academic reputation, but most students do not think in that direction.	3.86	1.285
B9- I am aware that actions can be taken by the University against students involved in plagiarism, but such punishments are rarely enforced.	3.91	1.215
Overall Mean	3.8067	.70771

Students' Attitudes Toward Plagiarism

The awareness factor regarding the seriousness of plagiarism even when it occurs in isolation is the strongest influence (Table 3), as shown by item C6 "I am aware that plagiarism does occur among students, but I believe it remains a serious issue even if only done occasionally" with the highest mean (3.79) and standard deviation (1.328), where students acknowledge that plagiarism remains a serious issue even if only committed occasionally. The prohibition factor against self-plagiarism ranks second with item C3 "I believe that reusing previously completed assignments without citing the source is not permissible, even if the assignments are nearly identical or similar" with a mean of (3.69) and standard deviation (1.094), reflecting positive attitudes toward the prohibition of reusing one's own work without appropriate acknowledgment.

The personal academic integrity awareness factor ranks third through item C4 "I believe that repeatedly copying ideas from the internet without any effort to improve them still compromises my academic integrity, even if no disciplinary action is taken" with a mean of 3.62 and standard deviation (1.246), indicating acknowledgment that copying ideas without improvement still compromises personal integrity even in the absence of disciplinary action. The academic pressure factor follows with item C2 "The

pressure to complete assignments within a short time sometimes causes me to consider copying, even though I know it is wrong" with a mean of 3.59 and standard deviation (1.176), revealing a tendency to consider plagiarism due to the pressure of completing assignments within a short time frame. The technical understanding factor regarding format plagiarism is shown by item C1 "Copying the reference format (such as the order of names, year, and title) from an example without copying the content is considered plagiarism" with a mean of 3.53 and standard deviation (1.133), indicating moderate awareness of plagiarism through copying reference formats. Finally, the perception factor regarding lecturer supervision recorded the lowest mean through item C5 "I assume that lecturers may not examine every assignment in detail, leading me to feel they would have difficulty detecting if I copied part of someone else's work" with a mean of 3.51 and standard deviation (1.389), reflecting varying assumptions about the effectiveness of lecturer scrutiny that may influence tendencies to engage in plagiarism.

Table 3. Descriptive Analysis of Students' Attitudes Toward Plagiarism

Attitude Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
C1- Copying the reference format (such as the order of names, year, and title) from an example without copying the content is considered plagiarism	3.53	1.133
C2- The pressure to complete assignments within a short time sometimes causes me to consider copying, even though I know it is wrong.	3.59	1.176
C3- I believe that reusing previously completed assignments without citing the source is not permissible, even if the assignments are nearly identical or similar	3.69	1.094
C4- I believe that repeatedly copying ideas from the internet without any effort to improve them still compromises my academic integrity, even if no disciplinary action is taken.	3.62	1.246
C5- I assume that lecturers may not examine every assignment in detail, leading me to feel they would have difficulty detecting if I copied part of someone else's work.	3.51	1.389
C6- I am aware that plagiarism does occur among students, but I believe it remains a serious issue even if only done occasionally.	3.79	1.328
Overall Mean	3.622	0.664

Students' Practices in the Context of Academic Assignments

Based on the mean order (Table 4), the time constraint factor (D2 "Sometimes, I copy passages from other sources without full attribution due to time constraints", mean 3.03 and standard deviation 1.368) is the greatest influence on plagiarism practices, followed by the lack of use of checking tools (D1 "I rarely use plagiarism detection software because I am confident that the assignment has been completed perfectly, even though I am actually unsure", mean 3.00 and standard deviation 1.381) and the tendency to rewrite without understanding (D3 "I prefer to rewrite information from sources even though sometimes I do not truly understand the content, as long as it appears original", mean 3.00 and standard deviation 1.414). These three practices are interrelated, where time pressure causes students to neglect plagiarism checks and choose to rewrite content mechanically without genuine understanding.

Table 4. Descriptive Analysis of Students' Plagiarism Practices

Practice Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
D1- I rarely use plagiarism detection software because I am confident that the assignment has been completed perfectly, even though I am actually unsure.	3.00	1.381
D2- Sometimes, I copy passages from other sources without full attribution due to time constraints.	3.03	1.368
D3- I prefer to rewrite information from sources even though sometimes I do not truly understand the content, as long as it appears original.	3.00	1.414
Overall Means	3.01	0.995

The findings of this study indicate that students' knowledge of plagiarism is at a high level, with a mean score of 3.81 obtained from nine questionnaire items related to knowledge about the definition, types, and implications of plagiarism among final-year students in the Faculty of Technical and Vocational. Based on the data collected, the majority of students demonstrated a good understanding of what plagiarism is, including copying paragraphs or information without providing proper references. These findings are consistent with the finding that students are most likely to identify plagiarism that involves copying text almost verbatim without citation (Faba-Pérez et al., 2024). However, there was slight variation in students' knowledge regarding more subtle forms of plagiarism, such as making minor modifications to sentences without proper attribution. Items such as B2 (minor modifications to source sentences) recorded a lower mean of 3.73, indicating some confusion or lack of understanding about these more subtle forms of plagiarism. The relatively high standard deviation for these items (up to 1.295) also suggests variation in students' opinions. This pattern is in line with many studies cited by Rahman, Eryck & Munirah, (2022). who reported that the vast majority of university students have a good basic knowledge of the general meaning of plagiarism as a form of academic misconduct and is supported by (Echanique, 2020) in his study titled "Academic stress and plagiarism tendencies among vocational students".

In terms of attitude, students showed a mean score of 3.62 with a standard deviation of 0.66, reflecting a moderately high attitude toward the issue of plagiarism. The majority of students acknowledged that plagiarism is a serious offense; however, factors such as academic pressure experienced when completing assignments within short deadlines remained a driver for their tendency to copy or reuse others' work without proper citation. For example, item C2, which inquired about pressure to complete assignments in a short time, showed a score of 3.59, confirming that students often face a dilemma between awareness of plagiarism and the pressure to complete work within limited timeframes. Students' attitudes towards plagiarism are generally described as mixed and non-uniform (De Lima et al., 2022; Dávila Morán, 2022; Phyo et al., 2023). Many students admit that plagiarism is an act of unethical, dishonest and damaging to the quality of education, but at the same time some of them still take it lightly in certain circumstances, for example for small assignments or when only part of the text is copied. In this study, students' level of knowledge of plagiarism recorded a high average (mean 3.81), indicating a strong awareness of this issue.

Regarding practice, the findings show a mean score of 3.01, indicating that students' practices are at a moderate level. This suggests that despite having good knowledge and a positive attitude toward plagiarism, students often engage in inappropriate practices, such as copying excerpts from sources without proper attribution. Item D2 shows that time constraints are a major factor driving students to copy excerpts from other sources, with a score of 3.03. Additionally, item D1 indicates that most students rarely use plagiarism-checking software, as they feel assignments are perfectly completed without recognizing potential plagiarism issues (score 3.00). This pattern aligns with findings at several other universities that show low rates of recognition of blatant forms of plagiarism as students become aware of disciplinary risks and serious academic implications (Mislay & Anania, 2023; Rustan, 2024).

The high standard deviation in practice (up to 1.414) indicates considerable variation in students' practices. Factors such as academic pressure and the lack of use of plagiarism-checking tools play a significant role in creating the gap between knowledge and actual practice among students. Although awareness of plagiarism is high, external factors and the academic environment still influence students' actions (Sozon et al., 2025; Rustan, 2024).

Study Implications

Theoretical Implications

The findings of the study confirm the suitability of the use of Theory of Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) as a framework to understand the issue of plagiarism among FTV final year students. Specifically, this study shows that knowledge students are at a high level while attitudes are at a medium high level and practice only at moderate level, once proves the existence of a clear gap between theoretical knowledge and actual behavior of students in the context of academic integrity. The implication is that the KAP model in the context of plagiarism cannot be understood purely linearly (knowledge → attitudes → practices) but strongly influenced by contextual factors such as time pressure, task load, and perceptions of supervision of lecturers who interfere with the translation of knowledge and attitudes to practice. This makes room for the development of a more natured KAP model ecology, by including environmental and institutional factors as moderators to the relationship between knowledge, attitudes and practices.

Practical Implications for the Faculty and the University

The finding that students' knowledge is high, but the practice is still modest and influenced by time constraints, lack of use of revision software as well as the tendency to rewrite without a deep understanding have implications directly to the design of interventions at the faculty and university levels. First, the strengthening of academic ethics education needs to move away from a general informative approach to applicable training that focuses on paraphrasing skills, use of digital resources and reference management, in line with student proposals that emphasize the importance of academic ethics education periodically (30.7%). Second, the findings on the role of time pressure as key catalyst plagiarism practices imply that the task scheduling policy, flexibility deadlines and course planning need to be re-examined so that they do not directly encourage students to choose unethical shortcuts. Third, low reliance on review software and at the same time the same recognition that the provision of technological tools can help reduce plagiarism indicates the need for universities to expand access to software review, accompanied by practical guidance so that its use is understood as a tool learning, not just to "lower the percentage of equality".

CONCLUSIONS

This study aims to evaluate the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of final-year students in the Faculty of Technical and Vocational Education regarding plagiarism. The findings show that students have a high level of knowledge about plagiarism, with a mean score of 3.81, but their attitude toward the issue remains moderately high, with a mean score of 3.62. Students' practices, however, are at a moderate level, with a mean score of 3.01, indicating that although students are aware of the negative consequences of plagiarism, they still engage in inappropriate practices, primarily due to academic pressure and time constraints. The gap between knowledge and practice identified in this study suggests that while students understand plagiarism as a serious offense, factors such as easy access to digital sources and limited time to complete assignments are major barriers to practicing proper academic ethics. Therefore, this study recommends strengthening academic ethics education with more comprehensive academic writing training, particularly in identifying and avoiding subtle forms of plagiarism such as inaccurate paraphrasing and the use of digital sources without proper attribution.

Additionally, this study also recommends innovation in the form of developing plagiarism-checking software that is more accessible and user-friendly for students throughout their studies. Students should be given more practical training in using these tools to ensure they can detect and avoid plagiarism in their assignments. More consistent enforcement of academic integrity policies also needs to be emphasized so that students are more accountable for their academic practices.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION

Olivia Labang.: Writing original draft preparation. **Zalina Ismail.**: Methodology and supervision. **Asilah Abdul Mutalib.**: Visualization. **Shaibatul' Islamiah Che Man.**: Writing- Reviewing and Editing.

AVAILABILITY OF DATA AND MATERIALS

Data available on request from the authors.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI

The authors declare that generative AI or AI-assisted technologies were used solely to improve the language and readability of this manuscript. All such use has been appropriately disclosed and the authors take full responsibility for the content of the work.

ETHIC STATEMENTS

Not applicable.

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