

# **Students' Post Plagiarism Experience and Resilience for Quality Research Activities in Nigerian Universities**

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## **Extend Abstract**

Research and Development (R&D) plays a significant role in the advancement of any nation including Nigeria. Universities in Nigeria are saddled with the fundamental responsibility of carry out research for development aside other duties such as teaching and community development. It is on this ground that students at different levels; undergraduate and postgraduate are mandated to carry out a research project in collaboration with their supervisors as a condition for graduation. This does not only contribute to the Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of students' but also contribute to the development of new knowledge needed for growth and development of the nation. Worrisome is the fact that several research activities both personal and institutional that have been conducted by students and even lecturers have failed the academic integrity test known as plagiarism. Some students have been forced to face disciplinary committees while some others have been forced out of the university. The experience of some students about plagiarism if not properly handled may limit their interest in research activities or contribute to the production of many more research output that will fail this academic integrity test.

The theoretical framework upon which this study was anchored was the Theory of Activity developed by Yrjo Engestrom in 1987. This theory points to the fact that communities such as the University and its stakeholders share the same object. However, in between the community and the subject which refer to the individuals, there are rule and then there is also division of labour between the community and the object. Therefore, the whole of these forces must interplay for any meaningful activity to take place in the system. Concepts that are relevant to the study such as the concept of plagiarism and research were succinctly defined. Plagiarism was defined as the act of laying claim to an idea that belongs to someone else without due acknowledgement. Research was also defined as also defined as the process of investigating an existing problem in order to produce new facts. The effects of negative plagiarism result, factors contributing to plagiarism problems,

challenges faced in overcoming these challenges as well as how these students are building resilience against these challenges in their research pursuit were also discussed. The study was also supported with relevant empirical literature which are relevant to the objectives outlined in the study.

The study was carried out to investigate students' post plagiarism experience and resilience for quality research activities in Nigerian Universities. There were four research questions and four corresponding null hypotheses that were answered and tested in the study. The design employed for the study was descriptive survey since the study deal with the collection of data to explain an existing phenomenon in order to make generalization. The population of the study comprised 242,000 postgraduate students in Nigerian universities (Statista, 2022). However, purposive and random sampling technique was used to select four universities (two North & South; two Private and Public) and these were Al-Hikmah University, Kwara State and University of Abuja, FCT in the North and Universities of Port Harcourt, Rivers State and Lead City University, Ibadan in the South. These four universities have a student population of 6, 918 while the Taro Yamane minimum sample size determination technique was used to determine the sample size of the study which was estimated as 378 and this was divided by the population strength of the universities as follows (University of Abuja 218, Al-Hikmah University 6, University of Port Harcourt 102 and Lead City 52). The 378 students drawn as sample for the study were selected across the different disciplines, sex, university type and location. The instrument presented to the selected respondents for data collection was a questionnaire titled "Students Post Plagiarism Experience and Reliance for Quality Research Activities Questionnaire" (SPPERQRAQ). The questionnaire had two sections namely Section A which was used to collect data from the students on their sex, type of university, location and discipline. The Section B of the questionnaire contained 20 questionnaire items responded to on a modified Likert rating scale of Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD) with weighted values of 4, 3, 2 and 1. These weights were summed together  $(4+3+2+1) = 10/4$  to arrive at 2.50 which was the criterion mean score used to agree or disagree with a questionnaire item.

The questionnaire was subjected to face and content validation after three experts; two in Measurement and Evaluation and one in Computer Science from the University of Port Harcourt were presented with copies of the questionnaire for their modification and suggestions. The inputs made by these experts were used in the preparation of the final copy of the questionnaire which

was administered to the 378 respondents used in the study. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was estimated using Cronbach alpha statistics and the four clusters of the questionnaire produced reliability values of 0.82, 0.94, 0.86 and 0.94 respectively and this produced an average reliability index of 0.89 which indicated that the instrument was reliable. The questionnaire was administered by the researcher with the assistance of four trained Research Assistants (RAs) who were educated on the process of collecting valid data from the respondents. Out of the 378 questionnaires administered, only 344 were retrieved which indicated a 91% retrieval rate which was adequate for the study. The research questions raised were answered using mean, standard deviation and rank order while the hypotheses were tested using z-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance.

The findings of the study revealed that the effects of a negative plagiarism report on the students included avoidance of online sources, reduced interest in academic research and psychological trauma due to victimization among others. It was also revealed that the factors that contributed to the plagiarism outcome included use of online sources without paraphrasing, use of information from third parties as well as use of weak plagiarism test software. The challenge faced in the use of online sources for research activities included the ill-equipped electronic library, lack of research support and inadequate ICT skills. It was indicated in the study that students built resilience by partnering with experts during research activities as well as undergoing training on research writing skills. There was no significant difference in the mean responses of the students across sex, university type, location and discipline. It was recommended that students should be trained on the use of online academic materials in the process of carrying out research activities. The study also recommended the need for plagiarism software to be made available or accessible to students to minimize the cases of plagiarism and its effect on the research activities of students in these universities.

**Keywords:** Plagiarism, Resilience, Research, Universities, Nigeria