# Academic dishonesty and misconduct: Curbing plagiarism in the Muslim world

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**Abstract**: Plagiarism is the theft of someone's ideas or language, and is a form of cheating which is morally and ethically unacceptable. This study analyses the nature of plagiarism from an Islamic perspective and its prevalence in institutions of higher learning in the Muslim world, especially among faculty members. It also examines the ways in which universities attempt to minimise or marginalise plagiarism. This study is warranted by the fact that there is relatively very little research on the issue of plagiarism at universities in the Muslim world and that existing research seldom addresses the issue of academics engaged in such unethical practices. Based upon existing surveys, interviews, and documentary sources, the study found that in earlier periods, standards were not inevitably lower than those that exist today and that the scope for condemning plagiarists has always existed. It also found that despite Islam's loathing, the incidence of plagiarism has grown significantly among Muslim students and faculty members in the Muslim world. The response to plagiarism varies from country to country. Some Muslim countries tolerate plagiarism, while others are taking steps to curb it. Institutions in Malaysia approach the problem of plagiarism as a matter of morality and crime that emphasise the need to develop writing and researching skills. They resort to honour codes, emphasise law and enforcement, and teach ways to write and cite. However, the success of these methods needs to be further probed.

**Keywords**: Academic integrity; honour codes; Muslim scholars; plagiarism; Turnitin.

**Abstrak**: Plagiarisme merupakan satu pencurian idea dan bahasa orang lain. Ia juga merupakan satu penipuan yang tidak bermoral dan tidak beretika. Kajian

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ini menganalisis budaya plagarisme daripada perspektif Islam, kelazimannya di institusi-institusi pendidikan tinggi di dunia Islam, terutamanya dari kalangan pensyarah-pensyarah di fakulti; dan mengkaji cara-cara bagaimana universiti-universiti cuba mengurangkan atau meminggirkan plagarisme. Kajian ini diperlukan kerana terdapat segelintir kajian tentang isu plagiarisme di universiti di dunia Islam. Lagi pun penyelidikan yang sedia ada jarang memberi tumpuan terhadap isu pensyarah-pensyarah yang terlibat dalam amalan yang tidak beretika tersebut. Berdasarkan tinjauan-tinjauan yang sedia ada, hasil penemubualan, dan daripada sumber-sumber yang berbentuk dokumen; kajian ini mendapati bahawa terdahulu bilangannya tidaklah tinggi berbandingkan dengan apa yang terdapat masa kini, tetapi skop untuk mengutuk plagiate-plagiate masih wujud. Ia masih berlaku walaupun Islam membencinya. Insiden plagiarisme telah tumbuh secara signifikan dalam kalangan pelajar Islam dan pensyarah-pensyarah dalam dunia Islam. Respons kepada plagiarisme berbeza dari satu negara ke satu negara yang lain. Beberapa negara Islam boleh bertolak ansur dengan plagiarisme; manakala itu banyak negara Islam sedang mengambil langkah-langkah untuk menyekatnya. Institusi-institusi di Malaysia mendekati masalah plagiarisme sebagai masalah moral, jenayah dan satu set kemahiran yang perlu dipelajari. Mereka mengambil jalan keluar dengan pengiktirafan kod perilaku, menitikberatkan undang-undang dan penguatkuasaannya, serta mengajar cara-cara untuk menulis dan membuat rujukan. Kejayaan kaedah-kaedah tersebut perlu diteliti dengan lebih mendalam lagi.

**Kata Kunci**: Integriti akademik; pengiktirafan kod; cendikiawan Islam; plagiarisme; Turnitin.

The term plagiarism is derived from the Latin word "plagiarius" which literally means "kidnapper" or "plunderer" (Harper, 2014) denoting the theft of someone's ideas or language. Since its first usage, plagiarism "has been regarded as a criminal activity– parallel to stealing other people's offspring!" (Ange'lil-Carter, 2000, p. 17). Plagiarism involves stealing someone else's thought or writing and using it as one's own without crediting the source. Students plagiarise by submitting the work of a classmate as their own, by interweaving several passages together from other's work without citations, or by "cut and paste" from Internet sources. Such transgressions may result in negative consequences ranging from failing the course to expulsion from the university. Forms of academic staff plagiarism include stealing a colleague's work or words, stealing the work of postgraduate students, insisting on co-authorship of a paper without actually contributing to the work, or by re-publishing one's earlier work with or without modifications. Plagiarism,

if detected, may ultimately result in the dismissal of the academic staff concerned.

Plagiarism is a pervasive ethical problem. In the case of students, plagiarism usually involves academic assignments and constitutes instances of academic dishonesty. However, when plagiarism occurs in the context of conducting research and publication perpetrated generally by professionals, they are termed scientific misconduct, which is a much more serious crime. This study analyses the nature and extent of plagiarism among students and staff in institutions of higher learning in the Muslim world. The discussion will concentrate on the defining characteristics of plagiarism and its diverse manifestations in the university environment. This is followed by a brief discussion on the way plagiarism is perceived in Islam and by Muslim scholars. The subsequent sections deal with incidences of plagiarism in the Muslim world and various strategies employed to curb plagiarism. These strategies include the use of "honour codes" that incorporate punitive systems to discredit plagiarists, and the various software packages available for the electronic detection of plagiarism.

This study is warranted by the fact that existing literature deals almost exclusively with plagiarism in Western countries, while there is relatively very little research on the issue of plagiarism among students and of academics engaged in such unethical practices in the Muslim world. This is not to deny the existence of works that deal with intellectual property rights (El-Bialy & Gouda, 2011; Malkawi, 2013) or its subcategory, copyright (Amanullah, 2006). However, plagiarism is different from copyright infringement. Plagiarism, although often considered stealing or theft, is not a legal concept and is not mentioned in any civil or criminal statute.

**The nature and scale of plagiarism**

Plagiarism has received a good deal of attention from scholars and institutions of higher learning. The International Islamic University Malaysia's Students' Discipline Rules 2004 defines plagiarism as "any idea or intellectual property expressed in material form, writing or data, of another person and claimed that the work, writing, data or invention is the result of his/her own findings or invention or any intellectual property right" (International Islamic University Malaysia, 2007, p. 18). Yale University views plagiarism as the "... use of another's work,

words, or ideas without attribution," which takes three major forms: "... using a source's language without quoting, using information from a source without attribution, and paraphrasing a source in a form that stays too close to the original" (Yale University, 2014).[1] To Gibaldi (2003, p. 134), plagiarism "is a form of academic theft" and a moral and ethical offense. Others describe it as "the unoriginal sin" (Colon, 2001) and "a writer's worst sin" (Miller, 1993). Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyuṭī, a prolific 16th-century Muslim scholar, wrote a book revealingly titled *Al-Farq bayna al-Muṣannif wa-al-Sāriq* (the difference between the author and the thief), wherein he uses the term "thief" to refer to someone who has stolen someone's text or the entire work without permission (al-Suyuṭī, 1998).

There is agreement among scholars that student cheating and plagiarism are becoming more common and widespread in tertiary institutions (Prenshaw, Straughan, & Albers-Miller, 2001). To some, it has reached an epidemic proportion (Hutton, 2002; McCabe, Trevino, & Butterfield, 1999). A report, based on survey research, found that almost one-third of the 6,000 students in 31 American colleges and universities had indulged in cheating of whom more than 30 per cent plagiarised all their papers (McCabe et al., 1999). This is due largely to the "digital revolution". The Internet has made it easy to locate relevant sources and to copy and paste together an entire section or chapter of a book or a thesis. What has not been recognised by many is that plagiarism can be detected with available software. In a survey conducted in a large college in the United States, Stearns (2001, pp. 145-146) found that "27% of the respondents copied a few sentences from a source without acknowledgement to its author." McCabe et al. (1999, p. 146), in a survey of over 80,000 students in the United States and Canada, found that "36% of the respondents paraphrased or copied a few sentences from a written source without proper documentation." In the USA, cheating among undergraduate students has increased steadily over the past half century from around 23 per cent to about 90 per cent (Jensen, Arnett, Feldman, & Cauffman, 2002). These concerns over the trend in student behaviour led to the establishment of the International Centre for Academic Integrity at Clemson University which currently comprises over 300 institutions of higher education. Plagiarism also prevails among academics with many high profile cases of plagiarism highlighted in the media. Curbing plagiarism in colleges

and universities requires a concerted effort by all those concerned with academic integrity. However, Paul Trout (1999) laments that while most professors do not plagiarise, "too many of us stand by, silent, when one of our own is set upon for exposing plagiarism, fabrication, or other wrongdoing that plague — and threaten to discredit — higher education."

Plagiarism takes place in a number of ways. Lucas (2004, p. 45) identified three distinct types. The first and "the most blatant — and unforgivable — kind of plagiarism" is global plagiarism where a person takes an entire book, a paper or a chapter from another source and passes it off as his or her own. This is also called word-for-word plagiarism. The second is "essentially a cut-and-paste job of ideas and words that are not your own" and is termed "patchwork plagiarism". The third type is called "incremental plagiarism" when a person does not give credit for specific parts or increments of a text that are borrowed from others. There also exists what is known as "reverse plagiarism" where a person attributes his/her own fictitious words to another person. Reverse plagiarism should not be equated with "self-plagiarism" which refers to an author's reuse in whole or in part of his/her previously disseminated ideas, text, etc., without any indication of their earlier dissemination. It may be noted, however, that using common expressions and idioms, obvious phrases, simple logical deductions and the like, are not considered plagiarism but it is advisable to add an inline citation wherever possible.

## Plagiarism and early Muslim writers

Plagiarism in any form is unacceptable. It erodes the fundamental value of academic research, breaches ethical guidelines and moral considerations and is considered by scholars like Gibaldi (2003), Colon (2001), al-Suyuṭī (1998), and Ange'lil-Carter (2000) to be a form of theft and fraud. Theft in Islam has decisive consequences. The Qur'ān (5:38) is categorical, "as for the man who is a thief and the woman who is a thief cut off their hands in requital for what they have reaped and as an exemplary punishment of God." Islam prohibits copying, counterfeiting, and theft. The Qur'ān condemns fraudsters, those who make a false representation of a matter of fact by words or by conduct, or by concealment of what should have been disclosed. The Qur'ān (3:188) also warns those "… who rejoice in what they have perpetrated

and like to be praised for what they did not do – never think them [to be] in safety from the punishment, and for them is a painful punishment." This verse apparently is pointing to those who plagiarise and would like to be credited with what they do not deserve. Plagiarism may also be taken to mean misrepresentation of the materials or false statements about the extent of a research study. False statement or testimony (*shahādat al-zūr*) is condemned in the Qur'ān (25:72; 22:30).

Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) prohibited taking someone's wealth without prior approval. He also condemned the person who attributes to himself/herself talents that he/she really does not possess as committing a double crime of stealing someone else's work and lying about it afterward. He is reported to have said, "He who acts dishonestly towards us is not of us" (Muslim, 1:181). Indeed, taking credit for someone else's ideas is most certainly a breach of trust. It is an act of bad faith to the person whose idea or work it really is. Conversely, quoting one's sources is an act of rendering trust. This is a religious duty as stated in the Qur'ān (4:58), "Allah commands you to render trusts to their owners."

The importance of attribution, i.e., acknowledging the work of others, is firmly rooted in the Islamic tradition. In their efforts to compile the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.), Muslims invented a scientific methodology based upon well-defined rules for data collection and verification. This *ḥadīth* (sayings of the Prophet) methodology consists of identifying and examining the reliability of each and every member in a chain of transmission accompanying each *ḥadīth*. This gave rise to a discipline known as *'ilm al-rijāl*, or biographical evaluation, which relates to the detailed study of the narrators, their biographies, the place of residence, and their date of birth and death (Abd al-Rahman, 1990). The objective behind the development of the rigorous science for citing one's sources was to prevent deceptive attribution or plagiarism known in Arabic as *tadlīs*.

Muslim scholars throughout history have been concerned about attributing the works they have borrowed from their predecessors. As Ibn Khaldūn points out, scholarship is a noble profession which requires its practitioners to be bound by certain ethical principles (Ibn Khaldūn, 1989). One such principle is to identify and acknowledge the person upon whose scholarship one relies. Thus, Banū Mūsā (1939, p. 25) and

brothers wrote in *Ma'rifat Misāḥāt al-Ashkāl al-Basiṭah wa-al-Kuriyyah* (learning the space of simple and spherical shapes), "everything that we described in our book is our work except for the difference between circumference and diameter, which is the work of Archimedes, and putting two amounts between another two amounts to come across one proportion, which is the theorem of Menelaus." The famous physician Abū Bakr al-Rāzī, whose *Kitāb al Ḥawī* contains extracts from Greco-Arabic and Indian literature, wrote, "I have collected in this book sentences and signs of the industry of medicine, which I have drawn from the books of Hippocrates, Galen, Ormasus, and other ancient physicians, in addition to modern ones, such as Paul, Aaron, Hunayn ibn Ishaq, Yahya ibn Maskawayh, and others" (al-Rāzī, 1955, p. 1). Similarly, al-Ghazālī used many sources in his books but with due acknowledgement. He acknowledged the works of scholars like Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, al-Shiblī, and Abū Yazid al-Bistāmī. With respect to a group of scholars, al-Ghazālī collected their books, studied them, "arranged them in a logical order and formulated them correctly" before presenting his view on the subject. For this, "some of the orthodox (*Ahl al-Ḥaqq*) criticised me for my painstaking restatement of their arguments" (al-Ghazālī, 2008, pp. 34-35). Indeed al-Ghazālī and other earlier scholars did not use quotation marks nor cite sources for every statement borrowed from others. This system of citing sources did not exist then. The transmission of knowledge by means of verified scholarship was usually confirmed by verbal or written permission. Contemporary scholars, unaware of the system prevalent in earlier centuries, accuse Muslim scholars of plagiarism in a sense of copying from other sources. For instance, Arberry (1956, p. 64) criticised al-Ghazālī for plagiarising al-Muḥāsibī while Masignon (1943, p. 153) accused him for borrowing from al-Makkī. Likewise, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyuṭī's method of compiling the *Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān,* an indispensable reference for those involved in *tafsīr* (exegesis) was erroneously considered blatant plagiarism.

Plagiarism, it may be noted, is somewhat a post-Enlightenment idea which in contemporary times is deeply entrenched and is accepted in countries at the centre of the world economic system. The term plagiarism, as Woodmansee (1994, p. 39) points out, is a "relatively recent invention." The rise in plagiarism allegations is associated with the developments in European-American history, which advanced the

notion that since the human mind is the creator of all knowledge, it should be privately controlled and the creator should be entitled to benefit financially or otherwise from the knowledge so created (Stearns, 1999). The convention of quoting sources precisely, and citing references, which scholars today consider natural, is "a very sophisticated act, peculiar to a civilization that uses printed books, believes in evidence, and makes a point of assigning credit or blame in a detailed, verifiable way" (Barzun & Graff, 1985, p. 23).

Muslim scholars, on the other hand, conceived knowledge as God-given and as common property, which needs to be shared rather than monopolised. They relied heavily upon memorisation of knowledge by heart and its oral transmission. They borrowed freely from each other and contributed to the pool of available knowledge. The value of their work was determined by its originality and creative impulse and also by its connection, in form and content, to the pious ancestors. Plagiarism was scarcely recognised as an issue in such an environment. Al-Ghazālī and other scholars were not obsessed with allocating credit to the point of stultifying their creative thinking. They borrowed and expressed their gratitude to those from whom they borrowed without specific attribution to passages that they utilised. Finally, they came up with something which was different from earlier scholars. Referring to al-Ghazālī's borrowings from al-Makkī, Sherif (1975, p. 106) rightly observes that, "Al-Ghazālī's originality can be seen in his selection, arrangement, and synthesis of the material he extracted from al-Makki."

Muslim scholars, in particular, abhorred the idea of stealing someone else's texts or books and passing it off as one's own. In modern terminology, this is termed global plagiarism, a practice roundly condemned by Muslim scholars. Ibn Khaldūn uses the term *intiḥāl,* a near equivalent term of plagiarism used in the Arabic literary tradition, to describe those who ascribe the works of others to themselves. Global plagiarism, to Ibn Khaldūn, is the most unethical deed in academic circles. Those who engage in this type of plagiarism are, according to Ibn Khaldūn, "ignorant and imprudent" (Ahmad, 2004, p. 105). Muslim scholars have not been guilty of global plagiarism. Scholars like al-Fārābī and others translated books of foreign scientists and commented on them but refrained from interfering in the text and thus preserved the author's ideas without distortion.

Equally despicable is "reverse plagiarism" wherein someone would write something but attribute it to another, usually a great thinker, either to legitimise an idea, discredit the author, or make money off the manuscript. Thus, Macdonald (1899, p. 72) reports,

> [a] book against the belief in saints was ascribed to Abu Bakr ar-Razi ... and it was suspected, falsely, in order to bring him into discredit. The same thing happened to ash-Sharani … Even Fakhr al-Din ar-Razi suffered from this … So we need not be at all surprised if this befell al-Ghazali also…."

A good deal of research has appeared from the middle of the twentieth century to determine the authorship of a manuscript through textual analysis. In sum, Muslim scholars abhorred plagiarism of all types including global and reverse plagiarism.

## Plagiarism in contemporary Muslim universities

In an ideal world, not a single Muslim scholar would ever engage in academic dishonesty. However, the reality is different and plagiarism has become a matter of great concern. This has often been attributed to the decadence in the society, and erosion of moral values at the family and community levels. Dishonesty and corruption thrive, it is argued, where moral values are eroded by greed and unbridled craving for luxuries and grandeur. In a survey of students from three universities in Malaysia, Imran and Ayobami (2011, p. 9) found, "the dishonesty practices among tertiary education students" to be shaped and influenced by cultures and values of the society wherein they grew and developed.

Many Islamic forums on the Internet and established Islamic websites contain articles copied verbatim from other sources without any attribution. Students in universities in the Muslim world do plagiarise. This is true as well of the academics teaching in the universities. Faculty members wishing to advance their career are under continual pressure to conduct research and publish in high impact journals. Similarly, students reading for a master's or doctoral degree are encouraged and, in some universities like the University of Malaya in Malaysia, required to write research reports and publish these in established journals before obtaining their degrees. The rush to meet the career advancement and degree requirements may lead faculty members and graduate students to resort to unethical practices during the research process. The Internet has made it easier to engage in what has variously been dubbed as "cyber-

plagiarism" (Anderson, 1999), and "academic cyber-sloth" (Carnie, 2001, p. B14). As Carnie (2001) points out, "the Web is a fabulous resource that no student or scholar can ignore. Somehow, though, we have to convince people that learning requires more than high-speed connections and a good search engine."

A growing number of plagiarism cases involving lecturers and professors in various universities have received increased media attention. One of the major academic scandals in the Arab world was the withdrawal of the Sheikh Zayed Book Award (valuing about $200,000) given to Dr. Hafnaoui Baali for his book *Comparative Cultural Criticism: An Introduction* (in Arabic). The committee in charge withdrew the award in 2010 as the book contained "wrongful appropriation of other authors' thoughts, ideas, and expressions, and the representation of them as one's own original work" (Seaman, 2010). In Egypt, a lecturer was taken to court for plagiarising a substantial part from the book of a fellow lecturer. The court confiscated the plagiarised book and ordered the offender to pay LE5,000 (about $90) in damages (Khaled, 2008, p. 3). In another instance, a lecturer at a public medical school in Alexandria, Egypt, nominated for the State Incentive Prize, was found to have plagiarised works published in journals. The disciplinary board, consequently, delayed his promotion to a professorial position. According to Radwa Ashour, "We used to discover a case of plagiarism every several years. Now we discover a number of plagiarism instances committed by teaching staff at Egyptian universities every year. This is a shocking matter" (Khaled, 2008, p. 5). Plagiarism is, however, not confined to Egyptian universities but found everywhere in the world, including the Muslim world. An Iranian-born tenured professor of political science and the head of the Middle East Center at the University of Utah was dismissed for plagiarism, "which is necessary to preserve the academic integrity of the institution and to restore public confidence in the university" (Maffly, 2011).

In Malaysia, a professor at the International Islamic University Malaysia, who had graduated a number of doctoral and master students, was accused of plagiarism in his published article. With enough evidence to implicate him, he was demoted in rank and eventually his contract was not renewed (Office of the Legal Adviser, 2014). The professor has since been unable to find a professorial job in other universities. In an informal discussion with the author (August 17, 2014), the professor

confessed to have plagiarised but he retorted: "many of my colleagues in the department are doing this but no action has been taken against them." According to the report, this is just the third proven case of plagiarism by a university faculty member in the last two years. An earlier case was resolved by the scholar through voluntary resignation (Office of the Legal Adviser, 2014).

Plagiarism, however, is common in many fields, including journalism, politics, and science. Among the journalists, the case of Fareed Zakaria, a *Time Magazine* columnist and *CNN* broadcaster is often cited. He was suspended by both his employers after he admitted to have plagiarised a paragraph in his report on gun control from a write-up in the *New Yorker* (AFP, 2012, p. 14). His "sin" was well publicised in the media and even though the *Time Magazine* re-instated him after one month's suspension, he could not regain the respect and esteem he held before the incident (Azmi, 2012, p. 2). There were also allegations that the current President of Iran, Hassan Rouhani, plagiarised his Ph.D. thesis at Glasgow Caledonian University, U.K.

Much more pervasive, however, is student plagiarism which has generated a great deal of media and research attention in Western universities. Recent research into plagiarism in Malaysian universities supports anecdotal perceptions that it is very widespread. This is confirmed by the findings of a peninsular-wide education survey conducted in November 2013. The stratified, random sample was composed of 1027 respondents of whom 98 per cent were Malay Muslims and within the range of 31 to 40 years and the rest above 41 years. Females constituted 52 per cent of the total respondents. In the survey, approximately 82 per cent of the respondents admitted to have "frequently" copied some parts of their assignments from published sources without attribution. However, they plagiarised only when they could not find enough materials to complete their assignments. Some 30 per cent of respondents admitted to have copied from friends' assignments with slight modifications. A significant number of respondents (52 per cent) copied from the Internet of whom 14 per cent said they did not copy verbatim but changed a few words, font, and format of the materials they copied. Interestingly, 74 per cent of students agreed that they "do not know how to cite Internet sources." A Ph.D. student submitted her assignment but could not present it orally. On insistence from the course instructor, she replied, "I must confess, the assignment

was written by my husband." The instructor told the author (August 12, 2014) that he decided to award an F for the course to which she replied, "I must be given a second chance as a reward for my telling the truth." Ting (2013) distributed questionnaires to 169 students enrolled in an academic reading and writing course at a Malaysian university. He found that students did not treat plagiarism to be a serious act of academic dishonesty. All the 169 students who took part in the survey were found to have plagiarised their assignments. They used materials without properly acknowledging the source of the information. A University Technology Mara Plagiarism Survey conducted in 2010 with a sample of 1,871 students found nearly 50 per cent of the students "admitted to having plagiarised and almost all know of others who have" (Universiti Technology Mara, 2012, p. 3). According to Kompas.com (2010, 28 April) in Jakarta, "Plagiarism remains a serious problem in Indonesia's academic life". This comment was in response to the revelation of a number of plagiarism scandals involving academics from prestigious universities in Bandung and Yogyakarta, Indonesia. There were reports of many proven cases of plagiarism involving professors teaching in the departments of sociology and international relations in Indonesian universities.

## Curbing plagiarism

Faculty and student plagiarism undermines the very idea of university as a morally responsible community of learners and calls into question the degrees that such institutions award. Consequently, efforts are being made to confront the issue and policies and guidelines have been adopted to deal with cases of plagiarism. Such concerns for curbing plagiarism, however, are not universal. In Bangladesh, for instance, there are 71 private and 34 public universities. Most of these universities do not have a policy to curb plagiarism. Borrowing from other texts is unrestricted. Faculty members freely borrow from a variety of sources without due acknowledgment. A study of six universities in Bangladesh found 76 per cent of students downloaded materials from the Internet, modified it and submitted it to the teacher without mentioning the source. Since most of the teachers themselves are engaged in plagiarism, they do not take any action against students. The authors point out that, "there exists no plagiarism prevention guideline and committee within higher

educational institutions" (Dey & Sobhan, 2006, p. 3). They also noted that students are punished severely for cheating in exams, but "they are not convicted and severely punished for plagiarism." Admittedly, the administrations of higher educational institutions do "not advocate plagiarism, they hardly take action against any researcher accused of plagiarism (Dey & Sobhan, 2006, p. 4). The same is more or less true of the higher educational institutions in Pakistan as well as India. Ramzan, Munir, Siddique, and Asif (2012) conducted a survey of 365 postgraduate students of randomly selected public and private sector universities in Pakistan and found that many of the respondents had low levels of awareness about plagiarism with most cases going unnoticed. Similarly, Hoodbhoy (2013) reported that, "many university teachers engaged in wholesale plagiarism, faked data and produced research that no one seems to have any use for. As academic ethics went into free fall, university administrators and the HEC turned a blind eye." Hoodbhoy also reported:

> Dr Isa Daudpota has documented many more cases of outright fraud than is possible for me to comment upon here. Patiently tracking down fly-by-night journals, both national and international, he finds that any 'research' can be published — for a price. One professor — let us call him Dr Z — recently received the Pride of Performance Award from the Government of Pakistan. Sarcastically referred to by Daudpota as 'Pakistan's Euler', he has been publishing one mathematics paper every week, year after year. A mass of evidence exists that Z is a cheat. Daudpota has demanded that the authorities investigate but his complaint will be just more water splashing off a duck's back.

Recent surveys of students cheating in African universities found ignorance, carelessness, lack of policies, and lack of effective enforcement mechanisms against plagiarism. Most students are not aware of plagiarism and most do not think that it is a big offence. The issue is confounded by the fact that academic staff are not doing anything to curb it. Muchuku (2011) noted that academic plagiarism in Kenyan Universities had increased in students' work, essays, term papers, and dissertations mainly because of the lack of anti-plagiarism mechanisms. Worried by the increasing incidences of plagiarism, the Committee of Vice Chancellors of Nigerian Universities (CVC) met and pondered over the issue. According to the CVC Secretary General

Mike Fabarode, plagiarism in Nigerian universities was "becoming a major problem" and vice chancellors had to swiftly tackle it "before it spreads like wildfire" (Edet, 2013). They decided in 2013 to deploy anti-plagiarism software, Turnitin. Nigeria thus became the first African country to introduce Turnitin on a national scale costing the universities N480 million (US$ 6 million) for a three year agreement (Turnitin, 2013).

Technology-equipped software like Turnitin or iThenticate is not feasible in developing countries like Pakistan and Bangladesh, because of the problems associated with a large number of students and staff, and accessibility to computers and Internet facilities. The situation in Middle Eastern universities is somewhat better. Here students and faculties believe in the necessity of citing sources and avoiding plagiarism. Most of the universities have rules against the violation of the ethical issues and access to Internet facilities (Eret & Gokmenoglu, 2010). Policy implementation, however, is not up to standard.

The government of Malaysia is directly engaged in countering plagiarism. The government over the years has enacted three Acts that govern the institution of higher learning: Educational Institutions (Discipline) Act 1976 (EIDA 1976), Universities & University Colleges Act 1971 (UUCA 1971), and Private Higher Learning Educational Institutions Act 1996 (PHLEIA 1996). Of direct relevance is EIDA 1976, which characterises student plagiarism as a disciplinary offence. According to Order 8 Rule (1) of the EIDA 1976 (2006, p. 32):

> …a student shall not make use of the text of any lecture or instruction imparted to him in the institution except for the purpose of pursuing his course of study; in particular he shall not reproduce in any manner the whole or any part of such text for the purpose of publication, distribution or circulation, whether for payment or not.

Plagiarism is identified in the EIDA 1976 as the act of taking an idea, writing, data, or invention of another person and claiming it to be the result of one's own findings or creation. It also includes putting someone's name as a co-author of an article or a book, when that person has not made any contribution to the work. An author who publishes an article or a book which is simply a translation of the work of another person in a different language is also identified as plagiarism. Order

48 of EIDA 1976 (2006, pp. 40-41), specifies further that a student found guilty of a disciplinary offence shall be liable to reprimand, a fine not exceeding five hundred ringgit (about US $150), suspension or expulsion from the institution by the disciplinary authority.

Public universities in Malaysia, in line with the government acts, have established policies to regulate plagiarism in the handling of assignments, research proposals, dissertations and any piece of work. These policies consider inappropriate authorship and research manipulation as serious violations subject to punishments. The universities consider all types of global, incremental and patchwork plagiarisms as unethical, meriting punishment for students and especially for those engaged in teaching and research in universities. Thus, Universiti Sains Malaysia's (2013, pp. 1-2) definition of plagiarism includes the following acts:

a. Quoting verbatim (word-for-word replication of) work of other people.
b. Paraphrasing another person's work by changing some of the words, or the order of the words, without due acknowledgement of the source(s).
c. Submitting another person's work in whole or part as one's own.
d. Auto-plagiarizing or self-plagiarizing one's own previous work or work that has already been submitted for assessment or for any other academic award and pass it as a new creation without citing the original content.
e. Insufficient or misleading referencing of the source(s) that would enable the reader to check whether any particular work has indeed been cited accurately and/or fairly and thus identify the original writer's particular contribution in the work submitted.

Plagiarism prevention policies fall into one of three broad categories: systematic software detection methods such as Turnitin; so-called honour codes that appeal to ethical values; and instructional initiatives to improve student-writing skills. All the universities scrutinise and compare student and staff work with a growing database of electronically available material to determine matches. They use plagiarism prevention software like Turnitin and carry out Google searches for this purpose. As part of this strategy, students and faculty are taught how to use the

software. The universities also require students to attach an "originality report", from Turnitin, on thesis/dissertation submitted for examination. Likewise, lecturers applying for promotion or renewal of contract are required to attach Turnitin reports on their publications to demonstrate that their publications do not match existing works in the database. This strategy evidently treats plagiarism as a criminal act much more than a sinful act and emphasises law and enforcement.

The second strategy is to consider plagiarism as a matter of morality and thereby create honour codes. Such codes appeal to the desire of students to do the right thing. Students are required to sign a pledge that they will uphold academic integrity and not plagiarise. All the institutions require students to take part in public oath ceremonies to indicate their personal commitment to upholding the institutional honour code. They are required to pledge that they will practice virtuous conduct as members of a scholarly community. In some universities, such as the USM, students are asked to sign an honour pledge. The policy guidelines emphasise the fundamental values of academic integrity (honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility). The International Islamic University Malaysia (2008), which considers plagiarism more as a matter of morality, goes to great lengths to appeal to staff and students' sense of ethics by explaining the values of integrity, honesty, sincerity, and good character from an Islamic perspective. For instance, the International Islamic University Malaysia Policy guidelines make it clear that academic integrity is a major institutional priority (2008, p. 7):

> In conformity with the moral imperatives of the Qur'ān, the IIUM community should strive to maintain excellent conduct, for Allah (s.w.t.) loves those who do excellent deeds. The staff and students should observe Islamic ethics in their social interactions. In light of the Qur'ānic assertions that Muslims constitute "the best community brought forth for mankind" (*Kuntum khayra ummatin ukhrijat li al-nās*) because "they enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong" (*ta'muruna bi al-ma'rufi wa tanhauna 'an al-munkar*) (Āl-'Imrān, 3:110).

It is claimed by many that the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) has benefitted from the ethical standards set out in its vision and mission statements and policy guidebooks. Research needs to be carried out to substantiate this claim. IIUM's emphasis on Islamic values is

regarded as one of the University's most noteworthy and respected traditions. The University makes it plain that lying, cheating, and other immoral activities will not be tolerated and anyone found guilty of such an offence will be punished accordingly.

The third strategy to counter plagiarism is to treat academic integrity, especially the mandate to cite sources, as a set of skills to be learned. All the universities provide guidelines and organise workshops to educate the student and staff in correct referencing formats, paraphrasing, and the like. The staff and students are taught the essentials of academic writing, with particular emphasis on the use of quotation marks for direct quotations as opposed to indirect ones. The handbooks published by the universities, as exemplified by Universiti Malaya (n.d.), carry the title: "How to avoid plagiarism." The International Islamic University Malaysia (2008, pp. 8-9) guidebook contains a section labelled "Prevention" which itemises the responsibilities of academic staff and students to promote "rigorous work, guided by high standards of excellent virtues." All the universities require students to register for a "research methodology" course which contains among others the need for citation and the methods of citation. The universities have produced their thesis/ dissertation manuals detailing the method and the forms of citation. The International Islamic University Malaysia thesis/dissertation manual, 2009, devotes four of its seven chapters to referencing systems. It also contains a special chapter on entering the names of Arab, Malaysian and/ or Indonesian origins in the bibliography. Universiti Putra Malaysia's guide to thesis preparation devotes two of its six chapters to writing conventions, one of which is exclusively on plagiarism which "is considered form of theft, and is under no circumstances acceptable in the world of scholarship. As such, if plagiarism is proven in a thesis at the examination stage, the thesis is automatically failed and the students' candidature terminated" (Universiti Putra Malaysia, 2013, p. 22).

It hardly requires mentioning that the booklet explaining the policy and procedure on academic integrity contains clear information on penalties for plagiarism following the EIDA Act 1976. With regard to students, plagiarism penalties vary depending upon seriousness of the case. Universiti Technology Mara (2012, p. 11), for example, applies four criteria in evaluating the seriousness of plagiarism: the experience of the students; the nature of plagiarism; the extent of plagiarism; and evidence of intention. Likewise, Universiti Sains Malaysia (2013, p. 5)

uses four levels of plagiarism to determine the severity of penalty to be meted. The first level includes inadequate or misleading quotation, referencing, or paraphrasing which would warrant light penalty such as warning or fine. The second level includes inappropriate or fraudulent acts of work due to ignorance. Level three includes "a copied work that arises from a clear intention to deceive". At the fourth level, the extent of plagiarism is "beyond reasonable doubt which includes a substantive plagiarised work as evident from the quantified degree of similarities." The penalties for plagiarism range from written warning and failure on a paper or a course to suspension or expulsion from the University. Academic staff found guilty of plagiarism are referred to the Academic Integrity Committee which verifies the allegation and metes out punishment ranging from demotion in rank to the termination of service with the University.

## Conclusion

Plagiarism, claiming someone else's work, in part or whole, as one's own, has been a cause of major concern in the world of professionals. There is extensive literature on plagiarism, particularly in the context of the North American and European experience, but there is little research on plagiarism in the Muslim world. Plagiarism undeniably is a major problem and one that appears to be on the increase particularly with increased access to digital sources, including the Internet. While students in higher institutions do plagiarise, their teachers and role models also take part in such academic theft.

The practice of plagiarism is a major challenge to institutional aspirations of academic integrity and a major threat to institutional quality assurance and enhancement. Plagiarism in whatever form is unacceptable. Islam rejects such a despicable act in no uncertain terms. Classical Muslim scholars did borrow from their predecessors but they did acknowledge their gratitude to those from whom they have benefitted. The issue of citing sources was not common since knowledge was not conceived as a commodity to be bought and sold but something created by God for the benefit of all. Muslims in recent times have accepted the need for citation thus giving credit where credit is due. Based upon scriptural sources, they consider plagiarism as a sin and a fraud and, therefore, subject to punishment. Yet, given the decadence and erosion of moral values, students and staff, including those at the

highest levels of university governance in the Muslim world have been caught up in matters of academic integrity arising from a failure to cite sources of their research work. Students, in extreme cases, have been expelled. The faculty members have been reprimanded, demoted in ranks, or forced to resign their positions. It is an academic crime, a sin, and behaviour not in conformity with the ideals upheld by an academic community.

The attitude towards plagiarism in the Muslim world varies from one country to another. Many universities in countries like Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Iran have no specific policy on academic integrity and honesty and are lenient toward plagiarism. In some Middle Eastern countries, the policies are in place but not implemented with full force. African universities have taken serious note of the academic theft and have taken the initiative in installing plagiarism detection software.

Malaysia has taken serious note of plagiarism. The government of Malaysia has taken the lead and is followed by all the government-funded universities. The universities have clearly spelled out the policy and procedure on academic integrity. They attempt to draw the attention of students and staff to what constitutes the act and ways of avoiding plagiarism. Students are awarded penalties commensurate with the nature and intensity of plagiarism. When students are informed that their work will be subjected to review, there is possibility that they will take extra care to follow the rules and to be more circumspect in their submission. Likewise, faculty members are informed that the level of originality and research in their published papers will be subjected to checking by plagiarism detection software. These policies are designed to promote a culture of academic integrity and honesty. The Director of the Legal unit, in an interview with the author, stated that the deterrent rules in IIUM help limit both the frequency and the degree of plagiarism. Such an observation needs to be empirically verified which calls for additional research into the "sins" of plagiarism.

**Endnote**

1. Scholars have not yet provided an operational definition of plagiarism in terms of how many consecutive words can be copied without attribution.

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