



Beyond Books: librarians as gatekeepers in the fight against plagiarism

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Abstract

This article is focused in the potential of college librarians as agents in the fight against plagiarism and promotion of academic integrity in educational institutions. Librarians, with their deep understanding of information quality, authenticity, reliability, and relevance to the users along with providing resources and support for plagiarism prevention act as gatekeepers in the fight against plagiarism and promoting academic integrity in academia. The objective of the study was to analyse the crucial role academic librarians play in shaping academic integrity in the digital age. The data required for the study has been collected from 51 librarians working in professional and non-professional colleges in Goa state of India. Based on the review of literature it was realised that plagiarism has become a pervasive issue in academics fuelled by the ease of copy-pasting and readily available information on the Internet. The data was analysed using MS Excel and presented in the form of tables and graphs. Results revealed that librarians play a very crucial role in addressing plagiarism in academics. Study also suggests that collaborative efforts between librarian and teachers are required for the effective plagiarism prevention in academic system. The study's results validate that overcoming obstacles is important for the successful execution of plagiarism prevention strategies within educational institutions.

Keywords: Academic Integrity, Collaboration, Plagiarism detection software, Plagiarism prevention, Plagiarism, Research ethics

1. Introduction

In the digital age, with ubiquitous nature of information, plagiarism has become a big problem. Plagiarism has become a pervasive issue in academics fuelled by the ease of copy-pasting and readily available information on the Internet. This necessitates an improved focus on academic integrity, particularly within academia (Miller, 2019). Librarians, with their deep understanding of information quality, authenticity, reliability and relevance to the users act as gatekeepers

in the fight against plagiarism and promotion of academic integrity. Librarian's proficiency in resource evaluation and citation can empower students and researchers to develop a strong ethical basis for their academic pursuits (MacDonald & Dalrymple, 2018).

Librarians who stand as disseminators of knowledge and are crucial elements in the fight against plagiarism are completely ignored when it comes to academic integrity. The traditional methods of plagiarism detection and prevention relied on technology and software



based solutions. It is important to know that awareness can be created to prevent plagiarism issues. This awareness will make students understand the importance of giving credit to the original author. Thus librarians are expected to prepare students with the knowledge necessary to navigate the complexities of academic research and research misconduct by incubating a culture of academic integrity through workshops and information literacy programmes (Bender & Pezold, 2013).

1.1 *Librarians and plagiarism deterrence*

Plagiarism poses a significant challenge in academic settings, eroding educational integrity and undermining genuine scholarly contributions. Librarians are pivotal in combating this issue, serving as gatekeepers who uphold ethical standards in information use. This theoretical framework examines their multifaceted roles, strategies, and impacts in addressing plagiarism. Information ethics theory guides librarians in promoting honesty and respect for intellectual property, essential in fostering ethical behaviour among students and faculty. Gatekeeping theory underscores librarians' role in filtering information and guiding users toward ethical practices. Moreover, social cognitive theory highlights their influence in shaping attitudes and behaviours through role modelling and educational initiatives.

Librarians actively educate through workshops on academic integrity and citation practices, develop educational resources, and offer personalised guidance to prevent plagiarism. They collaborate with institutions to formulate and implement policies on academic honesty and utilise plagiarism detection software to enhance digital literacy. By raising awareness and collaborating with faculty, librarians cultivate a culture of academic integrity.

Through literature analysis and librarian surveys, this research explores librarians'

potential as proactive agents in promoting ethical research practices. It advocates for librarians to expand beyond traditional roles, becoming integral partners in shaping academic integrity in the digital age. By leveraging their expertise and advocacy, librarians can empower educational communities to uphold ethical standards and combat plagiarism effectively.

2. Literature review

Plagiarism, the unethical appropriation of another's work without acknowledgment, poses serious consequences for students, necessitating a comprehensive understanding to avoid academic penalties (Biswas, 2020). Gibson and Chester-Fangman (2011) underscored librarians' efforts in orienting students and collaborating with departments to address plagiarism institutionally. Drinan and Gallant (2008) highlighted librarians' crucial role in academic integrity, advocating for their involvement in knowledge creation and plagiarism prevention through workshops and faculty collaboration. Shukla and Das (2020) further emphasised the collaborative approach between teachers and librarians in raising awareness and devising strategies against plagiarism. Caravello (2008) addressed graduate and professional students' academic integrity challenges, emphasising librarians' role in educational strategies. Gunton (2022) reaffirmed librarians' contributions beyond traditional roles in promoting ethical scholarly behaviour. Kloda and Nicholson (2007) found Canadian librarians actively promoting academic integrity in research-intensive universities through information ethics discussions. Bartlett and Casselden (2011) explored librarians' attitudes toward combating internet plagiarism, advocating for collaboration between librarians and educators. Sharma and Gupta (2019) examined a university library's initiatives in India, including workshops on plagiarism detection and citation practices, demonstrating librarians'



proactive role in fostering academic integrity. These studies collectively highlight librarians' multifaceted contributions in educating, preventing, and addressing plagiarism issues within academic settings globally.

3. Objectives

1. To investigate college librarians' views on curbing plagiarism
2. To assess library activities aimed at preventing and detecting plagiarism
3. To examine collaboration within the academic community to address student plagiarism
4. To understand the obstacles encountered in the fight against plagiarism in academia.

4. Research methodology

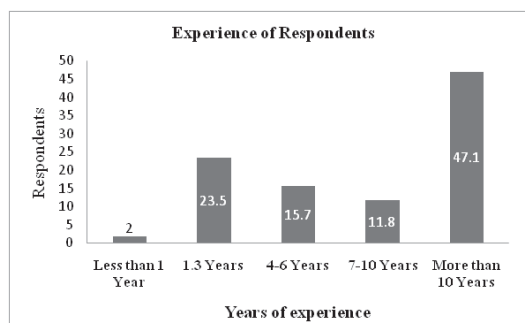
This study aimed to investigate the role of library professionals in the fight against plagiarism in Goa, India. Data was collected through Google forms and administered to participants in both professional and non-professional colleges across the state. The target population comprised library professionals in both professional (engineering, medical, law, etc.) and non-professional (arts, science, commerce, etc.) colleges in Goa. A list of all recognised professional and non-professional colleges in Goa was retrieved from the official website of Goa University. This list served as the sampling frame. The Google form included closed-ended and open-ended questions addressing the research topic. Collected data were analysed in table and figures with percentage method. MS Excel software has been used for analysing the collected data.

4.1 Sample size

The target population comprised 58 college librarians from professional and non-professional colleges in Goa. To determine the appropriate sample size for surveying a population of 58 college librarians, we used Cochran's formula for finite populations. With a 95% confidence level (Z-value of 1.96), a 5% margin of error, and an estimated population proportion of 0.5, we applied the finite population correction. This adjustment yielded a required sample size of approximately 51. This sample size ensures that the survey results will be reliable and statistically significant.

5. Data analysis and interpretation

5.1 Experience of respondents as librarian or head of the library



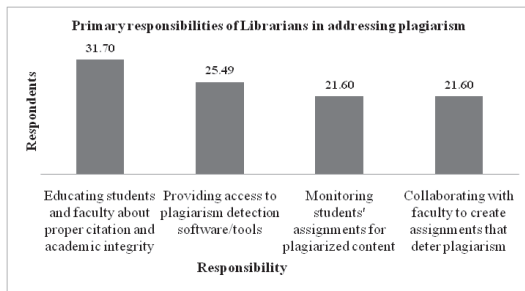
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Figure 1: Year of experience as librarian or head of the library

Figure 1 shows the distribution of responses across different experience levels. Most respondents have more than 10 years of experience, representing 47.1% of the total. The next significant group is those with 1-3 years of experience, constituting 23.5%. The remaining experience categories each contribute to the overall distribution, with less than 1 year having the smallest percentage at 2%.



5.2 Responsibilities of librarian in addressing plagiarism



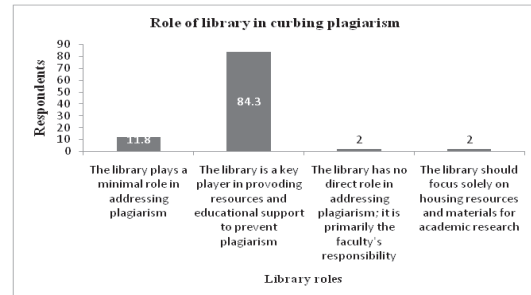
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Figure 2: Primary responsibilities of librarians in addressing plagiarism

Data in figure 2 illustrates diverse perceptions among librarians regarding their primary responsibilities in addressing plagiarism within academic institutions.

A notable percentage (31.7%) of librarians perceive their primary responsibility as educating students and faculty about proper citation and academic integrity. This emphasises the librarian's role as an educator, fostering awareness and understanding of ethical research practices. Approximately a quarter of respondents (25.49%) prioritise providing access to plagiarism detection software or tools. This reflects recognition of the technological resources libraries can offer to enhance plagiarism prevention. Similarly, 21.6% of librarians view collaborating with faculty to create assignments that deter plagiarism as their primary responsibility. This underscores the importance of cooperative efforts between librarians and faculty in designing effective anti-plagiarism measures. An equal percentage (21.6%) sees their primary responsibility as monitoring students' assignments for plagiarised content. This indicates a proactive stance in ensuring academic integrity through vigilant examination of student work.

5.3 Role of library in addressing plagiarism



(Values in the figure indicate percentage)

Figure 3: Role of the library in addressing plagiarism

In figure 3, a significant majority (84.3%) of respondents underscored the library's crucial role in providing resources and educational support to prevent plagiarism, highlighting consensus on its integral role in academic integrity. However, a minority (11.8%) view the library's role as minimal, suggesting a need for further investigation into underlying concerns. A small percentage (2%) believes the library should focus solely on housing resources, while another 2% feel plagiarism prevention is primarily the faculty's responsibility. These perspectives reveal diverse opinions on the library's functions and highlight varying expectations regarding its role in maintaining academic integrity.

5.4 Activities aimed at preventing plagiarism

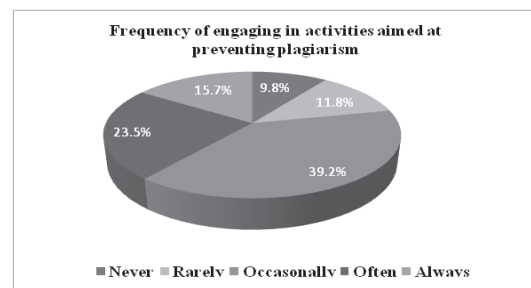
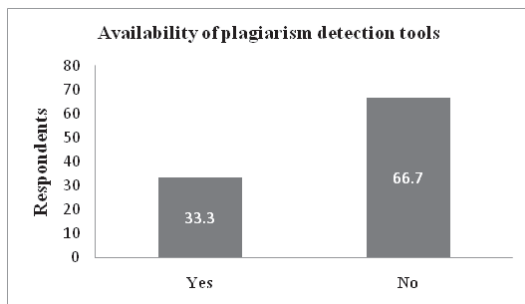


Figure 4: Frequency of engaging in activities aimed at preventing plagiarism



Figure 4 reveals the frequency of plagiarism prevention activities among library professionals, demonstrating varied levels of engagement. Approximately 39.2% participate occasionally, balancing these efforts with other responsibilities. About 23.5% are proactive, regularly integrating plagiarism prevention into their tasks. Notably, 15.7% consistently prioritise these activities, while 11.8% rarely do so, indicating potential challenges that warrant further exploration. A minority (9.8%) never engage in these activities, underscoring the need for support to enhance professional development and institutional commitment to plagiarism prevention.

5.5 Implementation of plagiarism detection software/tools within the library system



(Values in the figure indicate percentage)

Figure 5: Availability of plagiarism detection tools

Figure 5 explored the adoption of plagiarism detection software in academic libraries, revealing insights into current practices. Approximately 33.3% of respondents have implemented such tools, reflecting a proactive stance on academic integrity. Conversely, 66.7% have not adopted these tools, prompting an investigation into factors like resource limitations, institutional policies, or alternative anti-plagiarism strategies.

5.6 Different methods employed by library to check for plagiarism

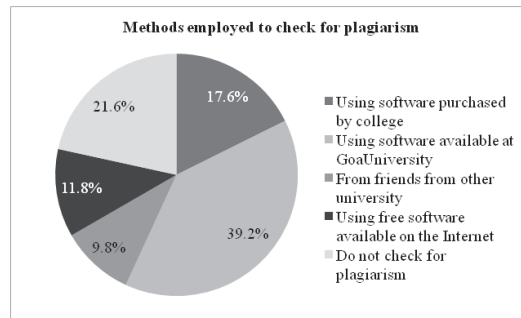


Figure 6: Methods employed to check for plagiarism

Figure 6 examines the plagiarism-checking methods used by college librarians, revealing a diverse range of strategies employed within academic institutions. A majority (39.2%) utilise plagiarism detection software provided by their university, indicating a reliance on institutional resources. However, significant portions (21.6%) do not engage in plagiarism checks, warranting further exploration into institutional practices. Some institutions (17.6%) invest in purchased plagiarism detection software, demonstrating proactive measures in preventing plagiarism. Additionally, a notable percentage (11.8%) use free online plagiarism detection tools, indicating consideration of cost-effective solutions. Small proportions (9.8%) rely on informal networks, suggesting questions about collaboration and information-sharing practices among academic institutions.



5.7 Collaborative efforts between library professionals and academic faculty in combating students' plagiarism

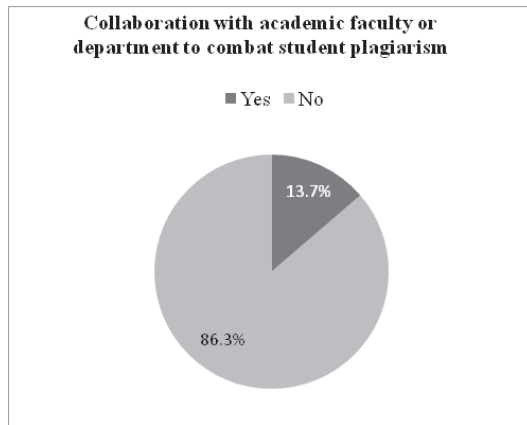


Figure 7: Collaboration with academic faculty or departments to combat student's plagiarism

Figure 7 investigates the collaborative efforts between library professionals and academic faculty in combating students' plagiarism, shedding light on the partnership level within educational institutions. Most library professionals (86.3%) reported forming partnerships or collaborations with academic faculty or departments to combat students' plagiarism. This indicates a strong commitment to a collective approach in addressing and preventing plagiarism issues. Another 13.7 % of library professional indicated that they have not formed partnerships or collaborations with academic faculty for plagiarism prevention. This raises questions about potential barriers or challenges that prevent collaborative efforts.

Table 1 reveals that a majority (70.58%) support collaborations for enhancing resources and expertise against plagiarism.

5.8 Benefits of collaboration

Table 1: Benefits of collaborations between the library and academic units in addressing plagiarism

Benefits of collaborations	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Enhanced resources and expertise	4 (7.84)	1 (1.96)	3 (5.88)	36 (70.58)	7 (13.72)
Increased student/faculty engagement	4 (7.84)	1 (1.96)	2 (3.92)	34 (66.66)	10 (19.60)
Greater impact in combating Plagiarism	3 (5.88)	2 (3.92)	1 (1.96)	35 (68.62)	10 (19.60)

The collective skills of library professionals and faculty are valued. Additionally, 66.66% see collaborations increasing student and faculty engagement, indicating joint efforts benefit academic communities. Moreover, 68.62% believe collaborations are more

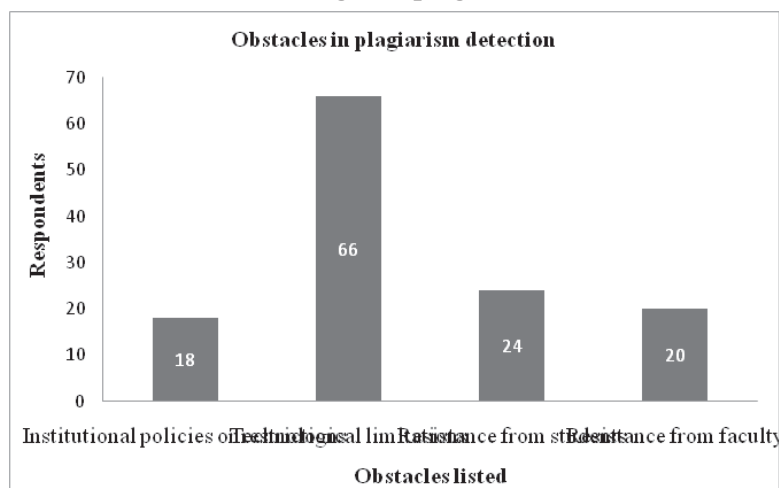
impactful in combating plagiarism, highlighting their effectiveness in strategy and outcomes.

Aure and Krupar (2001) did a similar study and they also reported that librarians play a crucial role in preventing and detecting



plagiarism by collaborating with faculty to reassess assignments and providing information on Internet paper mills and effective search strategies.

5.9 Obstacles encountered in the battle against plagiarism



(Values in the figure indicates percentage)

Figure 8: Obstacles in plagiarism detection

Figure 8 explores challenges faced by academic libraries in combating plagiarism, as reported by library professionals. Institutional policies or restrictions were noted by 18% as significant obstacles, warranting further investigation into specific hindrances. A substantial 66% highlighted technological limitations, underscoring the need to address issues related to anti-plagiarism tools and technical expertise. Resistance from students (24%) and faculty (20%) also emerged as notable challenges, requiring deeper insights for targeted interventions.

In addition to these challenges, the rise of AI-generated content in academia presents a significant concern for plagiarism detection. AI technology is increasingly capable of mimicking human writing, complicating efforts to distinguish between original and machine-generated work. This poses challenges for current plagiarism detection tools, which must evolve to effectively

identify AI-generated content. Librarians play a crucial role in staying abreast of AI advancements, updating detection methods, and emphasising the importance of proper citation practices to maintain academic integrity amidst these developments.

6. Discussion

Gibson and Chester-Fangman (2011) emphasised the pivotal role of librarians in educating students and faculty about citation practices and academic integrity. They highlighted the importance of institutional orientation programmes and professional development opportunities for librarians to enhance their teaching skills. Collaboration between library professionals and faculty is crucial in addressing plagiarism effectively in higher education. Institutions should promote communication and joint workshops to strengthen this collaboration and deter academic misconduct in writing. Libraries play a central role by providing resources and



support for plagiarism prevention and integrity promotion. Effective implementation of plagiarism prevention policies and the availability of detection software are essential. Institutions must promote awareness among faculty and students about plagiarism issues and ensure access to detection tools. Leadership support is critical in overcoming barriers to implementing these tools and fostering a culture of academic honesty.

In Nigeria, Opara and Eneh (2023) conducted a study demonstrating effective strategies in combating plagiarism, including proper referencing, citation practices, research clinics, and advocacy programs led by librarians. These initiatives significantly reduced plagiarism cases at the university level. The study underscores the effectiveness of collaborative efforts in implementing robust plagiarism prevention strategies. By prioritising the provision of plagiarism detection software, librarians enhance their capacity to detect and deter plagiarism effectively.

However, challenges in implementing plagiarism detection tools include technological limitations, and student and faculty resistance. Institutions need to address these challenges to align technological resources with educational goals effectively. Future research should explore the outcomes of plagiarism prevention strategies, such as changes in plagiarism rates and improvements in academic integrity awareness. This research would contribute to refining strategies and enhancing practices in combating plagiarism in educational settings.

7. Conclusion

Based on the analysis, researchers conclude that librarians play a crucial role in combating plagiarism through education, collaboration, addressing obstacles, and implementing strategies. However, the

emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI)-generated content in academia presents a new challenge. Librarians must remain vigilant and proactive in adapting to these technological advancements, as AI-generated content can evade traditional plagiarism detection tools, complicating the scholarly communication process. Despite these challenges, AI has also enhanced plagiarism detection methods by analysing vast text databases and identifying similarities, including nuanced instances of paraphrasing. Librarians can leverage AI-powered tools to improve detection accuracy and efficiency, aligning with their diverse strategies that include using university-provided or purchased plagiarism detection software, free online tools, and informal networks. Collaboration between librarians and academic faculty is crucial in addressing plagiarism effectively, underscoring the need to overcome barriers to collaboration and enhance partnerships. Future research should explore effective collaborative strategies for preventing plagiarism and promoting academic integrity, recognising the benefits of enhanced resources and increased engagement that collaborative efforts can bring to maintaining academic integrity in educational settings.

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