

## EFL STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ON PLAGIARISM IN HIGHER EDUCATION: TRIGGERING FACTORS AND AVOIDING STRATEGIES

**Safrul Muluk**

Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh  
[safrul.muluk@ar-raniry.ac.id](mailto:safrul.muluk@ar-raniry.ac.id)

**Habiburrahim**

Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh  
[habiburrahim@ar-raniry.ac.id](mailto:habiburrahim@ar-raniry.ac.id)

**Muhammad Safwan Safrul**

Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh  
[safwansafrul5@gmail.com](mailto:safwansafrul5@gmail.com)

### Abstract

*This study was aimed to examining EFL students' perception towards plagiarism, factors triggering students to plagiarize in completing their undergraduate theses and their strategies in avoiding plagiarism. The study, conducted at English Language Education Department, in one of the universities in Indonesia, employed a qualitative method approach aiming at getting more information and a detailed description of social or human issues. Ten alumni who were randomly selected agreed to participate in this study. Selected participants were interviewed to collect required information needed to address research questions of this study. Besides interviewing the students, the researchers also analyzed their theses in order to examine the level of plagiarism by using Turnitin software, the result of which showed that the range of similarities index in students' theses varied from 16 to 36 %. The findings of the study revealed that there were three strategies that students implemented to avoid plagiarism; paraphrasing and quoting others' ideas, understanding the meaning of plagiarism, and using the lectures' particular method and online plagiarism detection software. Furthermore, the study found that the factors influencing students to plagiarize were related to time limitation on an assignment and poor time management, ease of using online sources, lack of understanding to plagiarism, and poor understanding of plagiarism acts.*

**Keywords:** *Plagiarism, Academic Dishonesty, Cheating Behaviour, Academic Crime.*

### INTRODUCTION

It has long been acknowledged that one of the most pervasive problems in Higher Education (HE) that becomes a growing concern<sup>1</sup> is plagiarism, a form of academic honesty<sup>2</sup>. It is a recurring problem in HE<sup>3</sup>. What makes it worse, this problem seems to be multiplied exponentially with the availability of technological advances in the forms of

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<sup>1</sup> Obeid, R. & Hill, D. B., "An intervention designed to reduce plagiarism in a research methods classroom", *Teaching of Psychology*, 44(2), 2017, p.155.

<sup>2</sup> Heckler, N. C., & Forde, D. R. "The role of cultural values in plagiarism in higher education", *Journal of Academic Ethics*, 13(1), 2015, p. 61.

<sup>3</sup> Jiang, H., Emmerton, L., & McKange, L. "Academic integrity and plagiarism: a review of the influences and risk situations for health students", *Higher Education Research and Development*, 32(3), 2013, p. 369.

internet providing huge volume of accessible information.<sup>4</sup> There are a number of definitions put forward by educational practitioners to define plagiarism. It is an act of utilizing someone else's words or ideas without acknowledging the original source.<sup>5</sup> Plagiarism is also defined as putting someone else's intellectual thoughts as your own work without acknowledging the sources.<sup>6</sup> Pecorari and Petric stated that

Plagiarism has long been used as an umbrella term covering various types of unacceptable behaviour, some of which, but not all, refer to textual activity. Poor referencing, inadequate paraphrase and inaccurate citation are sometimes placed in the same category as commissioning a paper from a commercial service and submitting another student's paper as one's own.<sup>7</sup>

The problem of plagiarism, due to its complex nature, has been studied from many different angles. This can be seen in available works that consider plagiarism as rule violation, and academic dishonesty.<sup>8</sup> It has also been researched within the educational context.<sup>9</sup> While appropriate measures have been put in place to minimize this problem, for a number of reasons, the problem is still rampant in higher education. When discovered, it does not only incur academic penalty, it also affects students' academic skills.<sup>10</sup> Students do not really have the academic skills needed to compete with others once they graduate from university. While reasons for students' plagiarism vary, one of plausible explanation for this phenomenon is students' lack of research skills.<sup>11</sup> Students' unawareness and lack of research skills often result in the trap of plagiarism, in many cases often unintentionally.

This study, conducted within the context of State Islamic university in Indonesia, was intended to examine students' perception on plagiarism, explore triggering factors influencing students to plagiarise and scrutinize students' avoiding strategies. While many researches have been conducted in this particular area, the context in which this study was carried out was different. This study was conducted within the context of State Islamic university, specifically at English Language Education Department. As such, the

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<sup>4</sup> Husain, F. M., Al-Shaibani, G. K. S., & Mahfoodh, O. H. A. "Perceptions of and Attitudes toward Plagiarism and Factors Contributing to Plagiarism: a Review of Studies", *Journal of Academic Ethics*, 15(2), 2017, p. 167.

<sup>5</sup> Louch, M. O-B. "Teaching case single sourcing, boilerplates, and re-purposing: plagiarism and technical writing. *Information Systems Education Journal*, 14 (2), 2016, p. 28.

<sup>6</sup> Breen, L., & Maassen, M. "Reducing the incidence of plagiarism in an undergraduate course: the role of education", *Issues in Educational Research*, 15(1), 2005, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Pecorari, D., & Petric, B." Plagiarism in second-language writing ". *Language Teaching*, 47, 2014, p. 271.

<sup>8</sup> Ison, D. C. "Plagiarism among dissertations: Prevalence at online institutions", *Journal of Academic Ethics*, 10(3), 2012.

<sup>9</sup> Yeo, S. "First-year university science and engineering students' understanding of plagiarism", *Higher Education Research and Development*, 26(2), 2007.

<sup>10</sup> Bethany, R. D. "The plagiarism polyconundrum", *Journal of International Students*, 6 (4), 2016, p. 1045-1052.

<sup>11</sup> Breen, L., & Maassen, M. "Reducing the incidence of plagiarism in an undergraduate course: the role of education", *Issues in Educational Research*, 15(1), 2005.

researchers wanted to investigate the different nature affecting students' perception, along with challenges and avoiding strategies they may have.

## Literature Review

Experts in the area of education and educational psychology have come up with reasons why it is considered a complex problem. Individual, institutional, and contextual factors have been identified as areas that need to be scrutinized in relation to plagiarism. Individual factors (such as gender, self-esteem), institutional factors (such as academic penalty, codes of conduct) and contextual factors (such as peer cheating behaviours, perception of plagiarism) have been recognized to play important roles in triggering this cheating behaviour.<sup>12</sup> Factors such as certain individual characteristics pertaining to men and women<sup>13</sup>, gender and age differences, as well as differences in academic performance<sup>14</sup> have been linked to plagiarism triggering factors. Another expert in this area stated that students' academic achievement, age, social activities, study major, and gender are often linked to cheating behaviour.<sup>15</sup> Others suggested that gaining efficiency, lack of understanding, temptation and opportunity, time management and lack of deterrence policies are main factors why students commit.<sup>16</sup>

Other factors that are frequently linked to the act of plagiarism are students' lack of research skills, and their ignorant about what constitutes plagiarism. Students' lack of understanding about what is meant by plagiarism is also considered as one of the major factors leading to the problem<sup>17</sup>. Students unintentionally commit plagiarism in their academic works or research projects. In a similar tone, Park said that this lack of understanding is often caused by students' unfamiliarity with paraphrasing, citing, referencing or quoting original works<sup>18</sup>. This problem, coupled with the ease of accessing abundant information on the web through the use of smart phones and other technological devices readily available to students, has fuelled the increasing rate of plagiarism among students in higher education. "Access to information is no longer an issue when developing an academic task, but the excess of information and the ease with which it is accessed, stored and edited has become a challenge"<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> McCabe, D. L., Trevino, L. K., & Butterfield, K.D. "Cheating in academic institutions: a decade of research", *Ethics & Behavior*, 1(3), 2001, p. 220.

<sup>13</sup> Jereb, E., Urh M, Jerebic, J., & Sprajc, P. "Gender differences and the awareness of plagiarism in higher education", *Social Psychology of Education*, 21, 2017, p. 409-426.

<sup>14</sup> Newstead, S.E., Franklyn, S. A., & Armestead, P. "Individual differences in student cheating", *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 8(2), 1996.

<sup>15</sup> Gerdeman, R. D. "Academic dishonesty and the community college", *ERIC Digest*, ED447840, 2001. Available from: <https://www.ericdigests.org/2001-3/college.htm>

<sup>16</sup> Silfiani, Aziz, Z. A., & Daud, B. "Plagiarism in english academic writing: students' perceptions", *English Education Journal (EEJ)*, 9(1), 2018, p. 104.

<sup>17</sup> Power, L. G. "University students' perceptions of plagiarism", *Journal of Higher Education*, 80(6), 2009, p. 643.

<sup>18</sup> Park, C. "In other (people's) words: plagiarism by university student' literature and lessons", *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 28(5), 2003, p. 471.

<sup>19</sup> Olivia-Dumitrina, N., Casanovas, M., & Capdevila, Y. "Academic writing and internet: cyber-plagiarism amongst university students", *Journal of New Approaches in Educational Research*, 8(2), 2019, p. 113.

Students run a risk of plagiarism if they access online materials without knowing how to appropriately use them in their works. The growing concern about the potential of internet in fuelling students' appetite to plagiarise was also voiced by educational experts reiterating that the internet, undoubtedly, has influenced the way people access, share, and use information.<sup>20</sup> "The internet offers students extraordinary access to myriad information pertinent to their academic lives"<sup>21</sup> In relation to plagiarism, this enormous knowledge and information has made it possible for students to take and use the materials to work on their assignments.

Another factor influencing students to commit plagiarism is the pressure of achieving high grades. Social pressures often drive students to commit in academic dishonesty, including plagiarism. This situation is often triggered by competitive classroom environment pushing students to perform well. Students are often motivated to do whatever it takes to get better grades than their peers, even if they have to commit plagiarism.<sup>22</sup> The burden to have high grades does not only come from their peers, but also from parents and other family members pushing students to find shortcut to perform well.<sup>23</sup>

Although some of the factors mentioned above relate to the individual and contextual aspects, one important aspect related to this rampant problem which is often overlooked-institutional aspect-also plays a significant part in instilling students' cheating behaviour. Classroom arrangements such as assignment overload<sup>24</sup>, uninteresting course materials<sup>25</sup>, average teaching delivery, poor and complicated explanation, and resentment towards the way teachers run the class are common reasons prompting students to cheat.<sup>26</sup>

## METHOD

### Research Design

The research was aimed at examining factors influencing students to commit plagiarism, and their strategy in avoiding plagiarism in the Academic Writing class at Ar-

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<sup>20</sup> Heckler, N. C., & Forde, D. R. "The role of cultural values in plagiarism in higher education", *Journal of Academic Ethics*, 13(1), 2015, p. 61; Ramzan, M., Munir, M.A., Siddique, N., & Asif, M. "Awareness about plagiarism amongst university students in Pakistan", *Higher Education*, 2012, 64, p. 73.

<sup>21</sup> Chang, C.M., Chen, Y.L., Huang, Y., & Chou, C. "Why do they become potential cyber-plagiarizers? Exploring the alternative thinking of copy-and-paste youth in Taiwan", *Computers and Education*, 87, 2015, p. 357.

<sup>22</sup> Anderman, E. M., & Midgley, C. "Changes in self-reported academic cheating across the transition from middle school to high school", *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 29, 2004, p. 499-517.

<sup>23</sup> Mahmud, S., Bretag, T., & Foltýnek, T. "Students' Perceptions of Plagiarism Policy in Higher Education: a Comparison of the United Kingdom, Czechia, Poland and Romania", *Journal of Academic Ethics*, 17(3), 2019, p. 271-289; Ramzan, M., Munir, M.A., Siddique, N., & Asif, M. "Awareness about plagiarism amongst university students in Pakistan", *Higher Education*, 2012, 64, p. 73.

<sup>24</sup> Sprajc, P., Urh, M., Jerebic, J., Trivan, D., & Jereb, E. "Reasons for plagiarism in higher education", *Organizacija*, 50(1), 2017, p. 33-46.

<sup>25</sup> Gerdeman, R. D. "Academic dishonesty and the community college", *ERIC Digest*, ED447840, 2001. Available from: <https://www.ericdigests.org/2001-3/college.htm>

<sup>26</sup> Franklin, S. A., & Newstead, S. "Undergraduate cheating: who does what and why?", *Studies in Higher Education*, 20(2), 1995, p. 159-172.

Raniry State Islamic University, Banda Aceh, Indonesia. Qualitative research approach was used in this study. "Qualitative research is a mean for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem".<sup>27</sup>

### Participants

A total of 50 theses of English Language Education Department students who graduated in the 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 academic years randomly selected from the university repository were analysed in this study. 15 undergraduate theses before the issuance of the university regulations on plagiarism and 15 after the issuance were analyzed for plagiarism. After initial corresponding with ten students whose theses were used as the objects of the study, they agreed to be interviewed as research participants. Five female and five female graduates were interviewed. Names of research participants were not revealed as to remain anonymous.

### Data Collection

To examine factors triggering students' plagiarism and their strategies in avoiding plagiarism, the researchers applied interview and document analysis as data collection technique. It has "a structure, purpose, and form, and can be defined (usually) as a person-to-person structured conversation for the purpose of finding or creating meaningful data which has to be collected, analyzed, and validated".<sup>28</sup> Semi-structured interview was used for the purpose of this study. It enabled the researchers to engage in an in-depth interview in order to dig their insights on the problem investigated. Each research participant was interviewed for about 30-60 minutes. The interview process was recorded using a audio recorder.

Documents analysed in this study was student's thesis. Research participants were also informed that their thesis would be analysed to scrutinize whether there was plagiarism issues in their writings. *Turnitin* software was used to detect students' plagiarism and see the level of similarities with other materials. In using *Turnitin* software, the researchers excluded direct quotation, bibliography, and students' previous works. They were also informed that the result of their *Turnitin* would not be disclosed to protect their confidentiality. Within the context of this study, the researchers set up a maximum similarity threshold of 30% to be eligible as a non-plagiarized product of academic writing. This threshold was in line with the university regulation to promote academic honesty.

### Data Analysis

The data gained in this research was analysed using thematic analysis approach. As such, we follow a three-step process of thematic analysis. First, we familiarized ourselves with the data in order to generate initial codes. In the next stage, we searched commonality in the data to look for themes, then reviewed and defined the themes before starting the writing-up process.<sup>29</sup> The process of thematic analysis was also in line with Creswell's six

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<sup>27</sup> Creswell, J. W., *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). California: Sage, 2009, p. 4.

<sup>28</sup> Griffiee, D. T., *An Introduction to Second Language Research Methods: Design and Data*, California, USA: TESL-EJ Publications, 2012, p. 159.

<sup>29</sup> Maguire, M., & Delahunt, B. "Doing a thematic analysis: a practical, step-by-step guide for learning and teaching scholars. *AISHE-J*, 3, 2017.

steps data coding process. He stated that before writing a research report, there are six steps in coding the data that should be carried out, they are: organizing and preparing the data; reading all the data; starting the coding of the data; generating a description of the setting or people as well as categories or themes for analysis; advancing how the description and themes will be represented in a qualitative narrative; and interpreting findings and results in qualitative research.<sup>30</sup>

Within the context of this study, the researchers started the process of data analysis by listening to the audio recording of interviews before writing the document transcripts. This was conducted to ensure that all data was correctly transcribed. Once this step was done, the researchers started to look for common themes based on the research questions which were then coded and categorized accordingly. The last step was to interpret the findings and discussed the results.

## RESULTS

In presenting the findings and discussion, the researchers divided the discussion into three sections; (1) students' perception, (2) plagiarism triggering factors, and (3) students' avoiding strategies.

The findings of this study revealed that theses of the respondents of this study varied in the degree of similarity index analysed by using *Turnitin* software, as can be seen in the following table.

Table 1

Students' theses similarity index before the issuance of plagiarism standard

|                                        |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|----------------------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Students' number                       | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| Before Issuance of Plagiarism Standard | 32 | 27 | 35 | 32 | 28 | 35 | 30 | 33 | 36 | 26 | 22 | 32 |

Table 2

Students' theses similarity index after the issuance of plagiarism standard

|                                       |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|---------------------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Students' number                      | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| After Issuance of Plagiarism Standard | 22 | 16 | 20 | 18 | 20 | 26 | 22 | 19 | 17 | 18 | 22 | 30 |

The tables above show the similarity index of students' theses. Before the issuance of plagiarism regulation, students' similarity index ranged from 22 to 36%. After the issuance of plagiarism regulation, the similarity index in students' theses ranged from 16 to 30%. The highest similarity index accepted from undergraduate thesis is set at 30%, meaning that students with the percentage above 30% cannot seat in graduation.

### 1. Students' perception on plagiarism

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<sup>30</sup> Creswell, J. W., *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). California: Sage, 2009.

To explore students' perception on plagiarism, participants were asked for their opinions about plagiarism. Their perception on plagiarism can be observed in the following section.

### **1.1. Unacceptable act**

Based on the data of the interview, it was clear that all participants agreed that the act of plagiarism is unacceptable and it affect students' academic performance negatively. This can be seen in the statement of the participants. RA stated

*Plagiarism was a bad act. Because we took peoples' opinions and claimed them as our idea.*

In relation to this concern, another participant, SYR said:

*Plagiarism is like copying. The student was copying someones' idea, and it was not good. If we plagiarized the peoples' work, we did not believe in our work. It means we are not confident.*

Other participants, CRA, CDA, and SM were all in agreement that "plagiarism is a shameful act; it is like stealing someone's property". From the statements above, it can be concluded that research participants acknowledged plagiarism is an unacceptable act among students, even though some of them still doing plagiarism.

### **1.2. Taking other peoples' idea**

When asked about what constitutes plagiarism, RCA, one of research participants suggested that

*I think plagiarism is taking someones' idea or work, an idea or work of others that we took and claimed to be ours. Usually, it often happened in reports or presentation paper or another academic writing.*

*In my perception, plagiarism was not good because we plagiarize, which means we took the other peoples' work, and it is without any sources. Even actually, they have a copyright, and we cannot take their work arbitrarily (SM).*

Participants FM, SYR, JWN, and DL reiterated similar tone that plagiarism is using someone else's materials without proper acknowledgement. Furthermore, participant CDA argued that

*Whenever students use a person's intellectual works and take credits for the work, they commit plagiarism.*

It is clear that all participants considered plagiarism as the act of taking and using intellectual property of other people without giving credits to its rightful owners.

### **1.3. Academic crime**

Two of the research participants, SF and RA, suggested that plagiarism is an academic crime that must be banned. SF said

*I think plagiarism is bad because we steal other peoples' work without permission. When we steal something that belong to others, it means we conduct a crime, academic crime.*

In a similar vein, another research participant, RA, also explained the same idea. He stated:

*In my opinion, plagiarism is like a cheat. However, in plagiarism, we use the other peoples' work, and automatically it is a mistake. Because at least, if we wanted to take the other peoples' opinion, we need to paraphrase it or understanding the content, then used our words. However, in plagiarism, we only copy-paste and that is a cheat, or we can say like that is a criminal.*

Another participant, JWN, explained further:

*I think right now there is already a law on plagiarism, right? It is not allowed. So we as students must know what plagiarism is and, we also need to know how to avoid it*

Add some analysis here

## **2. Triggering factors.**

To answer the issue of factors influencing students to plagiarize, the researchers questioned the participants about their reasons students cheat in the course.

### **2.1. Limited time to work on assignment**

Most students said that limited time and assignment deadline is one of the factors that often drives students to plagiarize. Participant DL said:

*Because we have many courses during a semester, sometimes we have limited time to work on our assignments. Some of us try to get work on several assignments simultaneously, which often force us to turn to online sources. Often we ignore to paraphrase and acknowledge original sources.*

On this note, another participant, JWN said,

*In my opinion, for example, having to finish many course projects, some students could not handle the pressure, and they often look for an easy way out and fall into the trap of plagiarism. I saw and experienced it myself.*

In addition, participant RA stated:

*In my opinion, usually, it (plagiarism) happens because we are forced to work in a hurry. This situations require us as students to get the materials quickly. As a result, students only copy-paste materials they find online and thus commit plagiarism. That way, students can finish their works within the time limit.*

### **2.2. Technological development and ease of accessing online sources**

Interview results shows that one of the factors triggering students to plagiarize is the ease of accessing online materials, and technological advances



that allow students to browse, access and share online materials by using their smart phones. Once connected to the internet, students are exposed to vast amount of information needed to work on their projects. Participant CRA, said:

*Because the technology has developed immensely, it makes it easy for us to access and search online sources; it is easy for us to find the reference.*

Another participant, SF, gave a similar opinion:

*Some of them use online sources in finishing their assignments on campus because of the ease of access. That is the easiest way for us.*

Participant SM, however, suggested that lack of source in campus library is the reason why they prefer online sources.

*One more thing, we have limited resources here (in the library). For example, in our library, we cannot get updated books and journals as the requirement of the course. Many lecturers ask us to use recent articles as references, and we could not find them in the library. We will look for other sources, such as online materials.*

### **2.3. Poor time management**

Interview results reveal that poor time management was one of the factors influencing students to plagiarize. SF, one of the participants believed that there is direct relation between poor time management to the act of plagiarism. She said:

*I think plagiarism also takes place partly because of students' laziness and poor time-management. I sometimes postpone some of the assignment given by my lecturers, until I realize that I only have a week before submitting them. Thus I struggle to dedicate enough time and effort to finish my papers. I cannot help but try to finish all my papers in a hurry, and in many occasions I do not have time to paraphrase or reference my work properly.*

In a similar vein, participant SM said:

*I think, the phenomenon of plagiarism relates to the way students manage or plan their time. I know for a fact that many of my friends often postpone their assignments until the last minutes. If they have to work on one assignment for every course they take during the semester, they will not be able to have enough time to finish their assignments properly. They will be in a rush to meet the deadline, and as a result, the qualities of their papers or research projects are poor; and it is very likely that they commit plagiarism in the process.*

In addition, a similar answer was also mentioned by a participant, CRA as following:

*Students' lack of time-management skill has a role in driving students' cheating behaviour, especially in committing plagiarism. Their inability to plan and prioritize their works has led to lack of time to finish all responsibilities. Part of this problem also relates to their laziness, their unwillingness to do their assignments immediately after lecturers assign them.*

#### **2.4. Lack of research skills**

Based on the interviews, lack of research skills among students was also mentioned as one of the factors driving students to commit plagiarism. One of the participants, CD said:

*In my opinion, the students who plagiarize do not have proper research skills. Some of them are not even aware that they commit plagiarism. This is because they lack of knowledge in paraphrasing and referencing materials they take from the internet.*

Talking about students' writing skills, another participant, JWN said:

*Often, the students have no ideas on how to paraphrase sentences that they take from journals or books. They do not understand how to paraphrase sentences and quote them appropriately without falling into plagiarism. When they want to quote sources, they do not know how to make references.*

One of the research participants, CD, argued that students' difficulty in paraphrasing and referencing considered as part of research skills that must be mastered by university students is a detrimental factor causing this problem. She said

*When they (students) have ideas, they cannot express and develop their ideas. They turn to google or the other search engines and take relevant online materials as their work.*

On this note, one of the participants, SYR said:

*I think it has a lot to do with the inability to develop ideas. If a student is not able to expand his/her ideas, it is very likely that she/he will have problems in writing his/her papers. From my own experience, sometimes I often give up to write up my own sentences, not because I do not want to paraphrase, but because it is quite difficult to do.*

#### **2.5. Poor understanding of plagiarism**

Poor understanding of plagiarism could lead the students to commit plagiarism. RA, one of the participants, said:

*From my point of view, plagiarism exists because many students do not know precisely what constitute plagiarism. They do not have clear understanding of different forms of plagiarism, so they think that maybe it is safe to take someone else's works if it is not much.*

*I think I understand what it means by plagiarism. However, in my academic writing class, I was warned by my lecturer to be aware of plagiarism because I was not paraphrasing appropriately. Maybe my understanding of plagiarism is not correct (SM)*

### **3. Students' strategies to avoid plagiarism**

In relation to the strategies that can be adopted by students to avoid plagiarism, research participants mentioned a number of strategies that can be utilized to evade plagiarism. The strategies are as follows:

### **3.1. Paraphrasing and quoting other peoples' idea**

During interviews, paraphrasing and quoting intellectual works of others came up repeatedly. As a matter of fact, all research participants agreed that paraphrasing was the main way to avoid plagiarism. On this note, JWN stated:

*The way to avoid plagiarism is to paraphrase. Once we take people's ideas on certain issues, we need to change them into our own words, and quote them appropriately. We must put reference or footnote of the sources.*

In relation to this concern, another participant, CRA, said:

*In my opinion, we always need to quote references that we use in our papers. We need to acknowledge where we get the sources. To be able to use the sources, we have to paraphrase. Unless it is a direct quotation, we have to use our own words like paraphrasing.*

Participant SF also explained:

*My suggestion to avoid plagiarism is the students must read a lot of articles then they can do a direct quotation on their writing, if they feel confused with the articles that they read, they must read for several times to understand the content of articles, then they write it by using their own words.*

The rest of participants also reiterated similar thoughts on using paraphrasing as one of the methods in writing research papers.

### **3.2. Understanding the meaning and types of plagiarism**

Another strategy mentioned by research participants was the understanding of what constitutes plagiarism. Students have to understand the definition and types of plagiarism to avoid falling into the act of plagiarism in their writings. RA said:

*I think, to avoid plagiarism, we must know what plagiarism is. What acts are considered plagiarism? Once we know what acts are considered plagiarism, then we know how to work around it in the sense that we know what not to do. Then if in doubt, it would be safe if we quote the sources directly. That is my opinion.*

Another research participant, SM, said:

*In my opinion, most students who commit academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, do not have a clear understanding of this act. They do not know which acts are considered cheating. As a result, most of them do not realize that they plagiarized other's people works in their papers. One way to address this problem is by teaching students about types of plagiarism and ways to reference.*

In a similar tone, CDA argued that:

*I think, from my personal experience, students must master research skills, such as referencing, paraphrasing, and quoting. Although I have*

*taken classes in Research Methodology and English Language Research, I still feel that I have not written to the required standards. In many cases, I still struggle in writing my papers, especially when I have to paraphrase.*

### **3.3. Using lecturers' particular method or online plagiarism applications.**

Research participants also stated that to avoid plagiarism in their papers, they often implement strategies recommended by their lecturers. Using lecturers' particular method was one of effective strategies to avoid plagiarism. One of the participants, SM suggested:

*Based from my own experience, I often use my lecturers' method to avoid it (plagiarism). The lecturer asked us to come up with a short paper every week. For example, one of my lecturers asks us to work on 1 section of the paper first, such as an introduction section. The lecturer said "this week you make this section first". So there is a step by step process in finishing the assignment. the lecturer then checks our works and gives his inputs. Therefore, we could avoid the problem of plagiarism because we are given time to breathe and to consult everything related to the assignment.*

Another research participant, CRA, mentioned:

*In my writing class, my lecturer suggests that we check our papers using online plagiarism detection application, many of which are free. While some of these applications may not detect every single plagiarized sources, nevertheless they are useful to minimize the amount of plagiarism in the papers. I often use grammarly.com to check my grammar; and I use plagiarismdetector.net or duplichecker.com, free online plagiarism applications, to check my works.*

In a similar tone, participant SF stated:

*I often check my paper assignments by using online plagiarism software. The best thing is that it is free. Although the result of this free software may not be 100%, it helps me enormously in doing my papers. It is getting more difficult to get away with plagiarism now because our lecturers can check our works by using Turninit software. Some of my friends have to make major revision because their papers have a high percentage of similarity index with other works.*

*My English Research Methodology lecturer suggests that I check my works using online application such as grammarly.com. There is a free version and premium version if you want to get more features from the application. For me, I only use free version as I only want to check whether I make grammatical errors or not. To make sure if my works are free from plagiarism, I often use duplichecker.com. It is very useful to avoid plagiarism (DL)*

## DISCUSSION

The study was designed to investigate the students' perception towards plagiarism, its triggering factors, and students' strategies in avoiding plagiarism in a context of higher education. The discussion of the result of the study are divided into several themes, based on research questions.

The first theme relates to students' perception of plagiarism. Based on the result of the interviews, research participants agreed that plagiarism is not an acceptable act to do as it is a form of academic dishonesty. One student even said that plagiarism is an academic crime. This is because someone takes other peoples' ideas without consent or acknowledgement; it is like stealing from others. Factors such as gender differences, the way male and female students cope with study pressures, have been linked to this cheating behaviour.<sup>31</sup> The fact that research participants consider plagiarism an unacceptable act shows that they have some sort of awareness of this problem. Aware of the concept of plagiarism does not seem to prevent and deter them from cheating. This can be seen in the result of document analysis conducted on their research papers, as described in the result and finding section. Plausible explanation of this academic dishonesty, despite knowing the nature of this unacceptable act, is the pressure to have high grade. This is in line with the statement of Anderman & Midgley who argued that classroom competitive performance environment often pushes students to cheat in classes to get better grades than their peers.<sup>32</sup> In addition, demands from family members escalate the pressure on students to get high grade, sometimes at the expense of academic honesty and integrity.

The second theme of this study relates to the factors influencing students to plagiarize. Based on the interviews, several reasons driving them to plagiarize were mentioned by research participants. They are (1) limited time to work on assignment, (2) technological development and ease of accessing online sources, (3) poor time management, (4) lack of research skills, and (5) poor understanding of plagiarism.

Limited time available to work on assignment seems to be a classic reason mentioned by students, and it is closely related to their time management strategy. It is understandable that time becomes an issue as they often postpone to work on their assignments. This situation is closely related to their time management. To be able to succeed in their study, students need to always plan their study. This is especially true if they are enrolled in several courses during the semester. "Time management is self-management, organizing oneself to better manage time consuming activities. Structuring and developing to-do-list, overcoming procrastination, and developing time management techniques for effective time use".<sup>33</sup> Failing to manage time wisely will rush students on their assignments, which in many cases results in plagiarism as they have not given enough effort to properly paraphrase, and quote their sources. This can be seen in the data collected from students' theses showing the high percentage of similarity index.

Technological advances which enable people to access huge amount of online information has been deemed as one of the most influential factors that affects the way

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<sup>31</sup> Jereb, E., Urh M, Jerebic, J., & Sprajc, P. (2017) Gender differences and the awareness of plagiarism in higher education. *Social Psychology of Education*, 21, 2017.

<sup>32</sup> Anderman, E. M., & Midgley, C. "Changes in self-reported academic cheating across the transition from middle school to high school", *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 29, 2004.

<sup>33</sup> Rombe, M., L., M. "Effective time and self management, environment and productivity in an organization", *Science Journal of Business and Management*. 4(6), 2016, p. 205.

people run their activities, including in educations sector. "Today, learners can freely read thousands of books, articles, documents and other significant reports online".<sup>34</sup> Integration of technology in classroom settings, online learning, distance learning, and even teaching instruction are not uncommon nowadays. As such, accessing online materials through the internet is not alien to students. As a matter of fact, students are expected to be able to search materials needed for their research as part of their research skills. The problem lies in their inability properly use and quote those materials in their works.<sup>35</sup> "Cyber-plagiarism is an emerging term for the copying and pasting of online content, a practice characterized by the extraordinary ease of access that, owing to the Internet, would-be plagiarizers have to potentially plagiarize materials".<sup>36</sup> Undoubtedly, easy access to abundant online materials has the potential to be misused by students who often take citation for granted in their works.<sup>37</sup>

Interview results also reveal that lack of understanding of what constitutes plagiarism and lack of research skills were also major factors triggering students to plagiarize. Research participants highlighted students' difficulties in following principles of academic writing such as paraphrasing, quoting and referencing the sources used in their works. Moreover, the fact that some students have not understood fully the concept and types of plagiarism complicates the problem even more. Students' inexperience and unfamiliarity with paraphrasing, citing, referencing or quoting original works have been detrimental to their academic works.<sup>38</sup> What makes it worse; some students are not even aware that they commit plagiarism in their works.

The last theme relates to the question of the strategies used by students to avoid plagiarism. Based on the responses from research participants, three main strategies came up during interviews; (1) paraphrasing and quoting other peoples' idea, (2) understanding the meaning and types of plagiarism, and (3) using lecturers' particular method or online plagiarism applications.

To avoid plagiarism, participants were all in agreement that students need to understand the concept of plagiarism and to paraphrase when using someone's intellectual works. This is because "paraphrase is very significant for the students to expand their writing skill"<sup>39</sup>, and it prevent students from falling into plagiarism. According to the participants, despite taking the Research Methodology class, students are still confused about the types of writing considered as plagiarism. In this case, besides explaining what is

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<sup>34</sup> Habiburrahim, H. "The internet and ict: opportunities or threats to the education world", *Englisia: Journal of Language, Education and Humanities*, 3(1), 2018, p. 6.

<sup>35</sup> Li, Y. Y. "I have no time to find out where the sentences came from; I just rebuild them": a biochemistry professor eliminating novices' textual borrowing", *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 21(1), 2012.

<sup>36</sup> Chang, C.M., Chen, Y.L., Huang, Y., & Chou, C. "Why do they become potential cyber-plagiarizers? Exploring the alternative thinking of copy-and-paste youth in Taiwan", *Computers and Education*, 87, 2015.

<sup>37</sup> Owunwanne, D., Rustagi, N., & Dada, R. "Students' perceptions of cheating and plagiarism in higher institutions", *Journal of College Teaching & Learning*, 11(7), 2010.

<sup>38</sup> Park, C. "In other (people's) words: plagiarism by university student' literature and lessons", *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 28(5), 2003.

<sup>39</sup> Rahmayani, S. O., *Students' difficulties in paraphrasing english text*. (Bachelor's thesis). Ar-Raniry State Islamic University, Banda Aceh, 2018.

meant by plagiarism, lecturers need to provide examples and ask students to make several paragraphs as writing exercise in order to assess students paraphrasing skill. Students' works can then be analysed during the class to see if they are able to grasp the concept of plagiarism, and at the same times manage to quote people's intellectual works properly.

Another strategy considered useful in preventing plagiarism from taking place is to take lecturers' advice and method, as well as to utilize online plagiarism detection software. While lecturers' method and style of writing vary, their advice on avoiding plagiarism can be used by students. On this note, "although students' vague definition of plagiarism and the lack of knowledge about penalties for plagiarism sometimes cause plagiarism, faculty members should also recognize their responsibility to prevent plagiarism, for example, in setting up a clear-cut classroom policy toward plagiarism and structuring meaningful assignments to guide students to behave ethically".<sup>40</sup> In addition, using online plagiarism detection software helps both students and lecturers make sure that students' papers are free from this rampant problem.

## CONCLUSION

Plagiarism, taking someone's ideas without acknowledging it, has long been a major concern of those working in education sector, especially in higher education. Students plagiarize for many reasons, either intentionally due to lack of time or research skills, or unintentionally because of the unfamiliarity and lack of understanding of the issue. There are at least three main factors contributing to this problem; (1) individual factors, (2) institutional factors, and (3) contextual factors. In this study, we would like to examine how these three factors affect students' to plagiarize.

Individual factors, such self-management in the form of time management and self-esteem is considered a factor driving students to plagiarize. Their inability to plan and manage their time wisely has led to the lack of time, forcing them to rush their works, often by committing plagiarism. Institutional factors, such as interesting and challenging materials, lecturers' teaching method, and codes of conduct also play significant roles in this issue. Students are more likely to be motivated and are eager to give their best when they know that the course is invaluable to them. Contextual factor such as competitive classroom environment, influence from peers, and study pressures also have considerable impacts on students' behaviour.

The participants reiterated that plagiarism is a form of academic crime, an unacceptable act. They stated that it is a form of academic dishonesty, as students' take someone's intellectual property without giving credits to the owner. The reasons students commit plagiarism, according to the participants, are time limitation and poor time management, ease of accessing online data, lack of research skills and lack of understanding of the concept of plagiarism. To deal with this pervasive problem, three avoiding strategies were identified in this study; paraphrase and quoting, understand the meaning and types of plagiarism, and use lecturers' particular method and utilize online plagiarism software. These strategies are, according to the participants, important in order

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<sup>40</sup> Chen, Y., & Chou, C. "Are we on the same page? College students' and faculty's perception of student plagiarism in Taiwan", *Ethics and Behavior*, 27(1), 2016, p. 54.

to avoid plagiarism. When these strategies are implemented by both students and lecturers, it is very likely that the high rate of plagiarism among students decreases.

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