

## PLAGIARISM IN ACADEMIC WRITING AMONG STUDENTS OF HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTIONS IN MALAYSIA: AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

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### ABSTRACT

*With the emergence of cyber technology used as a learning tool, be it in the form of e-learning or as a means for finding and sharing information, many academic institutions are faced with unethical behaviors and misuse of technology, which has been an area of concern for a considerable number of years. Plagiarism and academic dishonesty have been discussed through various perspectives among educators, researchers, educational policy-makers, as well as media reporters. Yet, the problem remains unsolved indicating that either the issue has not been fully understood to the extent that can lead to an appropriate approach, or that the strategies developed have not been appropriately and sufficiently implemented. This paper engaged a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative enquiries to triangulate the findings in the attempt to investigate the factors that influence plagiarism and develop strategies to minimize this behavior, using Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), this time viewed from an Islamic perspective. The questionnaire survey was administered in four selected universities in Malaysia and involved a sample of 400 students, while the qualitative procedures included semi-structured interviews with five post graduate students and an open-ended survey. The analysis revealed that besides the original elements of the TPB there were other newly emerging elements, among which the element of Religiosity was visualized as an umbrella and had its influence on every other aspect of the issue. The revised model is provided with the hope that it offers strong implications for educational policy makers, academics as well as students in their quest to minimize plagiarism and academic dishonesty, and to also accomplish the aspiration for quality writing in higher learning institutions.*

**Keywords:** Plagiarism, Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), Islamic Perspective, Religiosity, Mixed Method.

### INTRODUCTION

For several decades the academic community has discussed through various perspectives, in various academic works the issue of misuse of technology only to witness the problem of plagiarism to be on the rise and reach epidemic proportions (Campbell, 2006). According to the Plagiarism Website (Plagiarism: Facts and Stats, 2017), a study by Donald McCabe (2005) revealed that 24% of graduate students self-reported to have plagiarized from Internet sources, while 25% of them self-reported to have plagiarized from written sources. In the Malaysian context, a study (Bava Harji; Naraina Chetty; Ismail & Letchumanan, 2016) reports 63.3% of the students of higher learning institutions admitting to have plagiarized, however P. Ramasamy (2016), the State Assemblyman for Prai and Deputy Chief Minister II of Penang, claims that plagiarism in Malaysian higher learning institutions is not only uncommon, but also it goes unpunished as authorities "prefer to sweep these ugly episodes under the carpet for fear that it might affect their academic rating." (online newspaper article). Considering it a major concern numerous educators, researchers, educational policy-makers, as well as media reporters have attempted to investigate into the causes, factors, detection, prevalence, and punishment of this unethical behavior (McCabe, 2005; Townley and Parsell, 2005; Bouman, 2009; Bennett, Behrendt, and Boothby, 2011, etc.).

Going through the literature on plagiarism one is met with various, often opposing opinions that can even cast more confusion on the issues related to plagiarism. Some writers blame it on the Internet and technology (Comas-Forgas and Sureda-Negre, 2010; Embleton and Helfer, 2007), some on the students' unwillingness to learn (Malesic, 2006), and others on the degraded and dishonest society (Saltzman, 2006). Often, the students do not know the right way to use information from other sources and they do not think they are being unethical when they quote from web sites without giving credits to the author or the source. Some succumb to plagiarism as a result of being overloaded with assignments and projects (Comas-Forgas and Sureda-Negre, 2010), and others justify their action by considering it a standard practice that is done by "everyone" (Hard, Conway and Moran, 2006).

Just as the reasons that lead to plagiarism are various, the means proposed to overcome the problem are as well numerous, starting from enforcement of strict policies (Campbell, 2006), to anti-plagiarism software and services (Lee, 2011; Warger, 2005). While many schools pay large amounts of money to plagiarism detection services like Turnitin.com, many educators and writers strictly oppose the practice of treating every student as a potential plagiarist and put emphasis on building personal integrity (Kavanaugh, 2003) and nurturing intellectual communities based on trust (Townley and Parsell, 2005).

The fact that the problem of plagiarism remains unsolved not only reveals the complexity of the issue, but also leads to furthering investigations into the core of the subject through new perspectives. The Islamic Worldview provides a rich divine guidance for moral and ethical standards of human actions, in every aspect of life. Besides, there is no study to examine the factors that influence and predict the plagiarizing behavior through Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior from an Islamic perspective. Thus, this paper looks at plagiarism from an Islamic point of view attempting to examine the attitudes of post graduate students towards the practice of plagiarism in academic writing, to determine the factors that lead the post graduate students towards practicing plagiarism, and to develop strategies that can be used to minimize the practice of plagiarism in academic writing. This research aims to contribute greatly to the general body of research to test the model of Planned Behavior

through an Islamic perspective, which will not only serve as a foundation for research involving Muslim communities, but will also provide guidelines for a healthier academic environment in general.

### Islamic Worldview and Ethical Behavior

Since Islamic ethics will be the guiding framework of this research, the discussion will start with an elaboration of the Islamic Worldview. Islam is not simply an ideology or tradition that consists of some certain rituals of worship. It is rather, a way of life whereby man's course of action is guided by the realization of his relationship to the Superior Being. In the words of Al-Attas (1996), a worldview is "the vision of reality and truth that appears before our mind's eye revealing what existence is all about; for it is the world of existence in its totality that Islam is projecting." (p. 26). This reality of truth includes the study of both the visible and invisible worlds projected in the human life as a whole.

The main concept of the Islamic worldview is the concept of *Tawheed* that is the recognition of the existence of only one God, the Creator, in all aspects (Abdalati, 1987). To realize this recognition, God has made known to man, through Revelations and Prophets, the purpose of man's creation that is, (1) to worship Him (*Ibadah*); - "And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me." [Qur'an 51:56]; (2) to be His representative (*Khalifah*) and form His *Khilafah* on Earth - "Remember when your Lord said to the angels 'Verily I am about to place a vicegerent (*Khalifah*) on earth.'" [Qur'an 2:30]; and (3) to bear His trust (*Amanah*) - "Indeed, we offered the Trust (*Amanah*) to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, and they declined to bear it and feared it; but man [undertook to] bear it." [Qur'an 33:72]. Thus, a man that understands the purpose of his creation is bound to act in accordance with the Divine will by worshipping his Creator through every single deed to prove that he is worthy to bear this vicegerency and uphold the *Amanah*.

While man has not been given a choice to the fulfillment of the Divine will in terms of his existence and physical functions, he possesses full freedom in the moral and ethical domain. "The ethical functions realize the moral values and these are the higher occupants of that realm, the higher imperatives of divine will." (Al-Faruqi, 1992, p. 66). It is this freedom that allows him the possibility to prove that he deserves to be God's vicegerent on earth by choosing to possess the qualities of honesty, sincerity, trustworthiness, and responsibility, comprised within the concept of *Amanah* and place man as the best of God's creations.

Abiding by the Islamic worldview, the development of a believer's character includes three aspects: the complete submission to Allah and obedience to Him and His Messenger, the spreading of the true message and knowledge to all human beings, and the "vitality", "alertness" and "attention" with which he performs in every occasion (Gilani, 2003, p. 254). Therefore, "human success and failure, gain and loss in the ultimate sense depend on right faith, right knowledge and right deeds integrated in a harmonious way." (Kamal Hassan, 1995, p. 12). It is this combination that stands at the core of ethics in Islam that leads to salvation in this world and the Hereafter.

Having such a comprehensive nature, the Islamic Worldview guides the personal development of a Muslim in all of its aspects namely, intellectual, spiritual, social, and moral. It is as well, this worldview that determines the value assigned to each of the concepts of good and bad, right and wrong, just and unjust, and so on. Thus, the Islamic worldview is the complete defined path where its adherents travel, where their every course of action succumbs to the will of God, and where they assume responsibility for their role by recognizing their abilities and overcoming their limitations. They are provided with a complete system of ethics and morals whereby the values, virtues, and *Adab* (behavior) are clearly defined with a double purpose, that is, to please the Creator and to help them succeed through the life trial by acting what is beneficial to them and the society they live in.

However, from the time of man's creation to our present days there have always been cases of personality corruption due to the nature of man, being subject to temptations. Academic dishonesty has sprung out since when knowledge and education started to be a commodity and competitiveness in the society gave rise to the appraisal of instrumental values. Yet, the most remarkable transition in the world of academia occurred when the developments in Internet and Web technologies made academic dishonesty considerably easy and tempting.

### Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior

This study has used the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as its theoretical framework. The theory was considered as appropriate for the study for various reasons. "TPB is one of the well-established social psychology theories employed to explain many human behavior related phenomenon[a]" (Nchise, 2012, p. 173). Besides, TPB pays special attention to the cultural beliefs of the population that is being studied by considering these beliefs to be contributing to people's intention and behavior (Poss, 2001; Tolma, Reininger, Evans, and Ureda, 2006). Furthermore, since the practice of plagiarism can be influenced by environmental factors, "perceived behavioral control becomes a valuable theoretical construct" (Tolma, et al., 2006, p. 235). Lastly, TPB has been widely used to predict misbehaviors such as lying, shoplifting, cheating and academic misconduct (Ajzen, 1991) through the factor of perceived behavioral control it can "enhance prediction in situations where behavior may be constrained and/or the behavior violates norms or rules" (Stone, Jawahar, & Kisamore, 2009, p. 223).

According to the theory, the factor of *Behavior* is the manifest, observable response in a given situation. Directly linked to *Behavior* is the *Intention* and it refers to the willingness of a person to engage in a certain behavior. This factor is influenced and predicted by 1) the *attitude towards the behavior*, which "refers to the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation or appraisal of the behavior in question"; 2) *subjective norm*, which "refers to the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behavior"; and 3) *perceived behavioral control*, which "refers to the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior and it is assumed to reflect past experience as well as anticipated impediments and obstacles" (Ajzen, 1991, p. 188). The concepts of *perceived behavioral control*, combined with *Intention*, have been found to have a direct influence on the actual *Behavior*. Thus, "a favorable *intention* produces the *behavior* only when *perceived behavioral control* is strong" (Ajzen, 1991, p. 188).

## METHODOLOGY

In the attempt to identify the factors of and strategies that can be used to minimize the plagiarizing behavior among students in the use of technology in academic writing, this study engages a combined method of quantitative and qualitative procedures. There are strong justifications given in the literature about why the researchers use a mixed method (Sreejesh and Mohapatra, 2014; Creswell, 2012; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010; Gorard and Taylor, 2004; Sale, Lohfeld and Brazil, 2002; Jick, 1979). Greene, Caracelli, and Graham (1989) have given five main reasons. Firstly, *triangulation*, which is the main reason of using mixed methods for this research, refers to the use of more than one method while studying the same research question in order to “examine the same dimension of a research problem” (Jick, 1979, p. 602), and is used to enhance the credibility of research findings. “Triangulation ultimately fortifies and enriches a study’s conclusions, making them more acceptable to advocates of both qualitative and quantitative methods.” (Hesse-Biber, 2010, pp. 3-4). Other reasons include, *complementarity* (Yauch and Steudel, 2003), *development* (Jenkins, 2001), *initiation* and *expansion* (Greene et al., 1989). The method of triangulation for this study has been used based on the Convergent Parallel Design whereby results from quantitative and qualitative data are compared and contrasted to reach at the final interpretation (Creswell, 2012).

The quantitative procedures included the distribution of an instrument consisting of 36 items. The data was analyzed using Multiple Regression Analysis (MRA), reporting as well on Analysis of Variance and Frequencies. The qualitative procedures included semi-structured interviews with five post graduate students and an open-ended survey. The interviews were audio taped and confidentiality of information was ensured. Besides, the two open-ended questions were qualitatively analyzed by coding them into categories to provide more information and to offer a deeper analysis of the phenomenon of plagiarism in academic writing in higher learning institutions.

## Population

The study drew the data using four Malaysian universities as the source setting for the research. The participants in this research were post-graduate students (Master and Doctorate) pursuing their studies in various fields (refer to Table 1 for the study’s population). These universities were chosen mainly for the fact that they have a majority of Muslim students. Economical and convenience reasons were taken into consideration for the selection of the universities.

**Table 1. Total Number of Postgraduate Students for Each University**

University	Number of Postgraduate Students		
	Master	PhD	Total
UM*	6,272	2,343	8,615
IUM**	2,460	1,062	3,522
UKM ***	5,959	3,546	9,505
USIM****	143	61	204
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,834</b>	<b>7012</b>	<b>21,846</b>

\*Source: Sistem Maklumat Ijazah Tinggi Universiti Malaya

\*\*Source: Centre for Postgraduate Studies IUM

\*\*\*Source: The Centre for Graduate Management (PPS)

\*\*\*\*Source: Sistem Maklumat Academic Siswazah, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia

## Sampling

The quantitative part of the study employed a probability sampling procedure using simple random sampling, while the qualitative part employed purposeful sampling. For the quantitative portion of the study, the author used a simple random sampling to represent the population. This method ensures that all possible samples of fixed size *n* have the same probability of being selected and that there is no need to number the entries in the population before drawing a sample like the simple random sampling (Cooper and Schindler, 1998). Meanwhile, the author considered Krejcie and Morgan’s (1970) recommendation to determine that the sample was adequate.

The qualitative study employed purposeful sampling. The purposeful sampling procedure has been credited because through this procedure the researcher chooses real informants who are familiar with the area of study (Silverman, 2008). For this purpose the researcher identified five postgraduate students that best fulfilled the criteria for the research. They all were outspoken students, a criterion that helps to provide vast information during the in-depth interviews. They were also postgraduate students with experience in research, as well as teaching so that they were sufficiently familiar with plagiarism. Additionally, they were chosen to represent different regions of the world, namely, Europe, Asia, Middle East, Africa, and United States of America, so as to reveal any possible culture differences and perspectives in dealing with the issue of plagiarism. They also belonged to different universities. Table 2 describes the characteristics of the participants of the study.

**Table 2. Participants of the Study**

No	Pseudonym	Gender	Academic Qualification	Research Experience	Region	University
1	‘Aishah	F	Master Student	Research Assistant	Europe	IUM

2	'Abdullah	M	PhD Candidate	Lecturer & Research Assistant	Asia	IUM
3	Hassan	M	PhD Candidate	Lecturer & Research Assistant	M. East	UM
4	Ahmad	M	PhD Candidate	Research & Publications	Africa	UKM
5	Ibrahim	M	PhD Candidate	Research & Teaching	USA	UKM

### Instrument

For the quantitative part the author used a questionnaire partly adapted from Mavrinac, Brumini, Bilic-Zulle, and Petroveckı (2010); Mayhew, Hubbard, Finelli, Harding, and Carpenter (2009); and Stone, et al., (2009), so as it suits the target population and reflects an Islamized concept of attitude towards plagiarism. The questionnaires were administered in a paper-and-pencil form. They included questions that were divided in five sections, for each of the elements on the model of the Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior. The questionnaire was composed of six (6) demographic items, thirty (30) seven-Likert-scale items on the five components, and two (2) open-ended, free-response questions on reasons that might lead students to plagiarize or restrain from it.

The qualitative part of the study utilized a semi-structured interview protocol, which was designed to enquire in-depth information on the participants' attitude towards plagiarism, the factors that influence them to plagiarize, and the strategies that can be used to overcome the problem of plagiarism in academic writing. The interview guide followed several steps, some of them as described by Creswell (2012, pp. 220- 221), to ensure a systematic procedure of data collection. Part of the data were as well the survey of two open-ended questions, distributed to 400 post-graduate students belonging to four universities.

### Validity of the Instrument

Besides consulting a team of researchers to build content validity and testing the questionnaires on a group of students to build face validity, the author run a pilot study. After obtaining the results, the necessary amendments were made to the questionnaire.

For as far as it concerns the qualitative part, the interview questions were organized in a way to guide the conversation based on the constructs from the theory. Another way to contribute to the overall validity and reliability is the purposive sampling of the participants (Patton, 1990; Given, 2008). The interviewees were selected based on certain criteria that could best provide in-depth information on the issue of plagiarism. Besides, the importance of the relationship between the researcher and the participants (Meara and Schmidt, 1991) was addressed through the rapport created since the researcher knew most of the participants personally and assured them about the confidentiality of the information. The setting of the interview was as well taken into consideration.

Among the most common strategies and procedures that demonstrate reliability and validity of the qualitative research are *Triangulation* and *Respondent Validation* (Lacey and Luff, 2001). *Triangulation* enables the researcher to present a full perspective on the issue that is being investigated by analyzing multiple data from various sources. This particular research made use of the semi-structured interview and the open-ended question survey as sources for data collection, addressing this way trustworthiness and establishing credibility and reliability of the research.

On the other hand, *Respondent Validation* involves in the research process the participants in the study, so that the researcher is not the only one that deals with the data. "Feedback to respondents has been seen as important in involving participants in the research process and, for some critical social scientists, in addressing concerns about the researcher having sole power of interpretation" (Lacey and Luff, 2001, p.23). The author of this paper contacted the participants and enquired for their feedback. They were asked to verify the transcribed text of the data collected through the interviews for correctness and accuracy of transcription. Their responses affirmed that their expressions were documented with precision and truthfulness.

### Data Analysis Procedures

This study made use of three procedures to analyze its data. Firstly, the quantitative data analysis for the questionnaire survey, which used Multiple Regression Analysis (MRA); secondly, the qualitative data analysis for semi-structured interview questions, which used a thematic analysis; and thirdly, the qualitative data analysis for open-ended questions, which used a coding analysis. At the end of the analysis, the findings from both methods were compared to each other and interpretations were made based on the Convergent Parallel Model.

#### *Quantitative Data Analysis for Questionnaire Survey*

In order to analyze the quantitative data, the study utilized standard Multiple Regression Analysis (MRA) using SPSS version 17.0. Firstly, the researcher analyzed descriptive statistics results to examine the means and standard deviations that describe the respondents. Analysis of Variance and T-Tests were also performed in order to be able to compare the means and see the difference in groups for intention to plagiarize and actual plagiarizing behavior.

Multiple Regression Analysis is used when we want to predict the value of a variable based on the value of two or more other variables (Pallant, 2007), in order to evaluate a certain model. In the case of the present study the author conducted two MRA tests. The first explored the relationship between Intention as a dependent variable and the three independent variables or predictors, namely, Attitude towards the Behavior, Subjective Norms, and Perceived Behavioral Control. The second test

explored the relationship between the three independent variables and Behavior, as the dependent variable. The study evaluated the model of the Theory of Planned Behavior in explaining the plagiarizing behavior, as well as established which variable in the set of variables was the best predictor of the outcome.

#### *Qualitative Data Analysis for Interview Questions*

The qualitative data collected through the interviews was analyzed using the six steps described by Creswell (2012, p. 236), namely: preparing and organizing the data, exploring and coding the database, describing findings and forming themes, representing and reporting findings, interpreting the meaning of the findings, and validating the accuracy of the findings. The recorded accounts were transcribed per verbatim. The author used the Express Scribe v5.04 software for complete accuracy. The audio-taped data was converted into transcription tables and the transcribed texts were then reduced to coding templates. The segments of data were labeled with codes and the overlapping occurrences or main ideas were then reduced into fewer codes, which were later collapsed to general themes.

Assessing inter-rater reliability is also an important method for ensuring rigor in qualitative research. Inter-rater reliability is used to assess the degree to which different raters agree or disagree in the assessment done to the coding process of a researcher. For this purpose, the author asked two raters to verify the consistency of the coding process from the transcripts. The two raters were chosen to be educators who were familiar with the area of plagiarism and academic writing. The study used *percentage of absolute agreement* type of inter-rater reliability test. The results showed consistency of agreement on the themes. The percentage of agreement was 96.5%, which indicates a substantial strength of agreement. The disagreements were reviewed and amended wherever necessary.

#### *Qualitative Data Analysis for Open-Ended Questions*

The qualitative data collected for this study included as well, two the open-ended questions posed at the end of the questionnaire survey.

The open-ended responses...permit you to explore reasons for the closed-ended responses and identify any comments people might have that are beyond the responses to the closed-ended questions (Creswell, 2012, p.220).

In order to analyze the open-ended data, the author looked at the responses and sorted the data by figuring out some patterns from where overlapping and repeated themes were generated. Those themes were coded into categories in the form of words or phrases, reduced to an abbreviated form and counted every time they were mentioned by the respondents.

## FINDINGS

### **Students' Attitude towards Plagiarism**

The analysis of the quantitative survey revealed a negative attitude towards the practice of plagiarism by majority of the students. The highest mean score for the attitude dimension was recorded on the item which states that plagiarism is against the Islamic principles. Besides, more than half of the students agreed and strongly agreed with punishing the plagiarists. Moreover, the Multiple Regression Analysis revealed that Attitude was the variable with the least contribution towards Intention, and second in its contribution towards Behavior.

The analysis of the textual data from the interviews revealed as well that the practice of plagiarism in itself raises a general negative attitude of students towards it. All the five participants in the qualitative phase of the study considered plagiarism to be a negative practice among the students of knowledge. 'Aishah regarded it as an *unacceptable negative action*; 'Abdullah and Hassan deemed it as *intolerable* and a *breach of Trust*; Ahmad equated it to *cheating and stealing*; and Ibrahim saw it as "*a grave wrong*" especially in the world of academia. In expressing their negative attitude towards plagiarism all the participants enlisted as well the negative status of the practice from an Islamic point of view. However, since this element occurred quite frequently throughout the textual data recordings of all the five participants and in various contexts, the author decided to consider it as a new and very substantial theme, which is being discussed later in this chapter under Religiosity.

Adding on the negative attitude towards plagiarism the respondents also considered the people who engage in such practice as *irresponsible, untruthful* to their work ('Aishah), *dishonest* and *lazy* (Hassan, Ahmad and Ibrahim). 'Abdullah and Hassan made an effort to distinguish between the people who plagiarize intentionally and those who do it out of *confusion* and *unawareness* of the writing techniques. On the other hand, although Ibrahim saw plagiarism as "a grave wrong", he imparted that it is also a "complex and highly charged subject" (I 5; DU 22). This opinion was affected by what he provided as a justification that some people fall into this practice due to marginalization in the society and the educational system.

The students' negative attitude towards plagiarism also was shown in their opinions about the punishment of the plagiarists. 'Aishah, 'Abdullah and Hassan asserted that intentional plagiarism must not be left unpunished and should not be tolerated. However, Hassan added that punishment should be done according to the seriousness of offence. 'Abdullah and Ahmad on their opinion about the punishment of plagiarists suggested that the first step, which should always come before punishment is to create awareness and give a chance for repentance. Ibrahim also agreed that the plagiarists should face the consequences, as it goes against the rules of the world of academia.

Based on the open-ended responses, while stating the reasons that lead them to the decision to or not to plagiarize, the students expressed as well their attitude towards the practice of plagiarism. Majority of the students hold a negative attitude towards this practice. They consider it as: Morally and Ethically Wrong, as something that contradicts with their Performance Competency, as showing no Respect for Others' Work, Against the Islamic Ethics, Illegal, and Embarrassing. However, two of the students that

responded to the open-ended questions, although they held a negative attitude towards plagiarism, they believe that Knowledge Belongs to God and not to the human beings, thus, rendering plagiarism as non-existent since human beings cannot claim ownership over knowledge.

Thus, all the three types of data produced the same findings on the students' attitude towards plagiarism and they are as well supportive of the findings from the literature that although the attitude towards plagiarism is generally a negative one there are various exceptions and justifications that lead one to fall into this unethical practice.

### **Factors that Influence and Strategies to Minimize the Practice of Plagiarism in Academic Writing**

While the element of Attitude towards plagiarism was discussed in the above section of this article, this section discusses the other remaining factors that influence plagiarism. Besides, since the strategies for minimizing plagiarism are drawn from the factors that influence plagiarism, the author has merged the discussion of the two to avoid repetition.

#### **Subjective Norm**

From the quantitative analysis, Subjective Norm was found to be the variable that made the second strongest contribution in explaining Intention and the strongest contribution in explaining Behavior. Subjective Norm explained almost 10 per cent of the variance in Behavior scores. These results support the opinion given by 'Aishah and Ahmad, the two participants in the qualitative phase of the research. The fact that Subjective Norm makes a stronger contribution towards Behavior compared to that towards Intention, can be explained by the idea provided by Hassan that others' plagiarism has a strong psychological and emotional effect, which can lead a person to commit the actual Behavior, even though he/she does not have the Intention to do so. Thus, although the effect would not be so strong on the Intention, the psycho-emotional effect produced by the circumstances can lead to the negative Behavior regardless of the person's Intention. In this case, it was the element of Religiosity that helped Hassan and Ibrahim to resist the effect and not create contradiction between their intended and actual behavior.

'Aishah and Ahmad believed that the perception that others plagiarize can have a strong effect on the intention to engage in such behavior. Thus, they think that if plagiarism is perceived as a norm in the campus, it might serve as a factor to encourage the plagiarizing behavior. 'Aishah highlighted the fact that one does not feel the need to be honest when by being honest he/she achieves either the same as, or even lower than those who are dishonest and when honesty and effort do not pay off.

The literature suggests that since human beings are social beings, the society and the environment where they develop academically play a crucial role in their academic behavior, thus, they practice what they perceive as a norm for the society (Iyer and Eastman, 2006).

Although Hassan shared the same opinion with 'Aishah that other people's plagiarism can affect one psychologically and emotionally, especially seeing that the dishonest people not only get away with their dishonesty, but also succeed and get promoted before those who work hard for it, he and Ibrahim were firm that no matter what, their intention and behavior would not be affected in any way. This certainty came to them from the fact that they are Muslims. Hassan made his point by valuing his concept of *Amanah* more than any "benefit" he could get from plagiarizing. On the other hand, Ibrahim highlighted his will for closeness to the Creator by resisting to follow others on what is prohibited and disliked by Him.

#### **Perceived Behavioral Control**

Some interesting results were revealed by the quantitative analysis regarding the factor of Behavioral Control. A total of 55.1% (n = 220) of the students agreed and strongly agreed with being afraid of punishment if they get caught plagiarizing, while 66.3% (n = 265) of the them agreed and strongly agreed that with the use of technology, the act of plagiarizing can be easily detected, recording the highest mean score of 5.55 for this statement. However, while the independent variable of Behavioral Control had the strongest contribution towards Intention, in the second set of Multiple Regression Analysis it had the weakest contribution towards Behavior. This can be explained by the fact that when the fear element is strong, it is strongly reflected in a person's intention to stay away from this negative practice. However, when it comes to the actual behavior, there might be other factors that play a more contributing role and have a stronger effect.

Moreover, all the participants in the qualitative part of the research affirmed that fear of being caught can also have an intensive effect on the intention to plagiarize. 'Aishah would feel the influence by knowing the degree of seriousness of her instructors about plagiarism, and would act accordingly. 'Abdullah was more worried about the unethical means that some academic writers chose to deal with this fear and avoid the consequences in the case they would get caught. They make use of the inequity before the law that breeds in the society to cover their academic dishonesty demonstrating how one kind of dishonesty in the academic environment brings about the other. Hassan expressed the effect of fear of being caught through his concern that he might commit plagiarism unintentionally, due to the very complex technicalities of academic writing. He said that this fear forced him to check his writing many times for any possible violation of the rules and sometimes served as a barrier to free expression of ideas. Ibrahim was the only one who said that he was not afraid of being caught by the people. The only thing he feared was being taken away from the pleasure of Allah.

The influence of Fear of Being Caught and Punishment in students' intention to plagiarize and their plagiarizing behavior was clearly seen from the analysis of the open-ended responses, as well. This element was listed by 65 students (27.08%) as the main reason that prevented them from plagiarizing (please refer to Table 4.19, p. 144). Thus, Behavioral Control was considered as the most influential factor in plagiarizing behavior.

Investigating on the factors that influence academic integrity McCabe, Trevino, and Butterfield (2002) found that Perceived Behavioral Control, represented by the students' degree of fear of being caught, has a significant influence on academic misconduct. The findings highlighted that students have a greater tendency to engage in academic dishonesty when rules and punishment are not imposed or are not severe enough to outweigh potential benefits of cheating even when they are included in the institutions' policy.

### Religiosity

Just as Islam is not simply a religion, but a way of life that covers all aspects of a person's existence, the theme of Religiosity occurred quite frequently and was touched in every segment of discussion, throughout all the interviews with our five participants. The theme of religiosity covered all the other factors since all the answers given included an Islamic perspective. 'Aishah brought up the element of Religiosity when she mentioned the concept of *al-nisiyaan*, whereby man is called *Insan* because of his forgetfulness (*al-nisiyaan*), which implies that although man knows what is right and wrong, he forgets to connect between the theory and practice. She also provided *Iman* (faith) as a reason that influences intention to plagiarize, indicating that a person with strong *Iman* would be able to translate into practice the concepts of right and wrong, permissible (*halal*) and forbidden (*haram*).

'Abdullah considered plagiarism "a breach of *Amanah*" and "disservice to the *Ummah*" by which he connected his view with the concepts of *Trust* and *Islamic Community*. He also suggested us to look for our role models in our Islamic scholarly system to build a strong educational system with leadership characterized by *Taqwa* (God-consciousness) and principles guided by the Islamic Worldview.

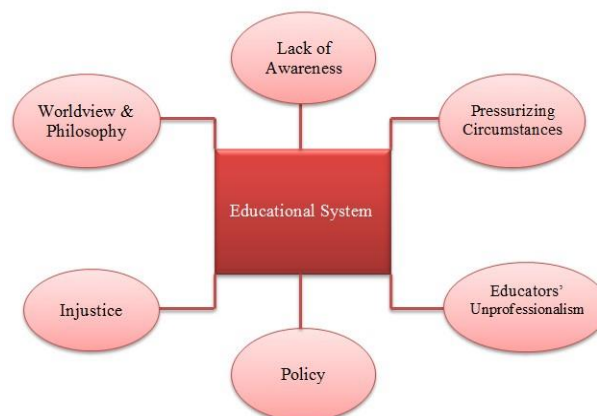
Hassan's strong point supporting the theme of Religiosity was through the concept of *Amanah*. He insisted that everything we have been given in this world is a Trust from *Allah (swt)* and no benefit in this world can outweigh the loss of this trust because if *Amanah* is lost, so it is everything else, as everything is *Amanah*. In the same way, Ibrahim would never engage into something that would take him "away from the pleasure of Allah". Thus, for Hassan as well as for Ibrahim, no matter what the circumstances, it is the Religiosity, implied by upholding of trust and obtaining the pleasure of the Creator that guides all their actions.

The most important thing thus, is that a Muslim student should always remember that for every good intention, there is a good way and that for every sacrifice and hardship there is boundless reward from the Creator. The All-Knowing, All-Seeing rewards every deed based on the intention, and *hard work and sincerity (Qawiyun Amin)* always pay off in this world and in the Hereafter. Since man has been trusted with the *Amanah*, to be God's vicegerent on earth he has been chosen to possess the qualities of honesty, sincerity, trustworthiness, and responsibility, comprised within this concept and been placed as the best of God's creations. Thus, the theme of Religiosity affects all the other factors, whether existing in the initial framework, or emerging through the analysis of the textual data, as an umbrella that covers each and every aspect in the life of a Muslim.

### Educational System

This theme emerged as well as one of the most substantial influencing factors that contribute to the students' practice of plagiarism in academic writing. Under the main theme of Educational System there were discovered six sub-themes that demonstrate how important the role of educational system is to the integrity of the academic behavior. Figure 1 presents the six sub-themes under the major theme of Educational System.

Figure 1. The Major Theme of Educational System and its Sub-Themes



### Lack of Awareness

One of the main reasons that cause students to succumb to the unethical practice of plagiarism in their academic writing is the failure of the Educational System to create awareness about the issue. All the participants in the qualitative part of the study revealed that either they, themselves are not aware of all the forms of plagiarism, or that they have noticed in other students the amount of confusion about what constitute of plagiarism.

Asked about the definition of plagiarism our participants limited their answers to copying others' materials and submitting as one's own without acknowledgement. While this definition is true, it does not encompass all the different forms of plagiarism. Parts of the definition of plagiarism might be common to various institutions or individuals. However, other parts may vary and even contradict to each other. This confusion about what constitutes plagiarism can cause students to plagiarize unintentionally. There is not a clear-cut way to judge about what may or may not be considered as plagiarism since the general definition "does not deal with the question of what might amount to an improper taking having regard to the form of the attribution given" (Wyburn, 2009, p. 42). Thus, the students might not be able to differentiate between someone's idea and common knowledge and as such, confusion in definition would definitely lead to confusion in practice.

Moreover, in the examples given to the participants of this research, to state whether they were or were not cases of plagiarism, most of them expressed confusion, uncertainty, or unawareness about practices such as, changing key words and phrases but retaining the important content without making proper citation, borrowing from one's own previous work without citation and submitting the same paper for more than one course, paraphrasing from different sources and making the content fit together without the proper acknowledgment, and citing only the original author when his/her work is cited by another.

Likewise, the study done by Yusof and Masrom (2011) among Malaysian students reveals that knowledge about plagiarism is shallow and insufficient. In another study, self-plagiarism is as well not considered as a form of cheating by most students.

Generally, our students do not perceive self-plagiarism as being offensive. Nearly half of them agree that self-plagiarism is harmless...and justified (Pupovac, Zulle, Mavrincac, & Petrovecki, 2010, par. 23).

'Abdullah was the one who brought up the issue of unawareness more frequently during the conversation. He considered plagiarism as a very grey area, which needs to be addressed by the institution by offering training to students of all levels, as well as special courses being made compulsory to all areas of education. He emphasized that there is a lot of confusion about what plagiarism is and that there should be adequate information about plagiarism before we reach for punishment. Hassan and Ahmad, as well, stressed on the need to create awareness and train the students on the technical process of writing as most of the plagiarism, according to them, happens unintentionally. Hassan also suggested that this training should start as early as the school years, so that the students would get experience in and be familiar with quality writing.

Lack of awareness was as well the main reason for plagiarism listed by the students in the open-ended responses. Out of the total of 240 students who responded to these questions, 53 (22.10%) of them admitted to have plagiarized due to lack of knowledge and unawareness of the rules of academic writing, 11 (4.58%) of them because they had mistakenly forgotten or were careless to cite and make proper acknowledgments, and 3 (1.25%) of the students claimed to have plagiarized unintentionally.

These results highlight the need to create awareness and provide training for students, which can help them avoid unintentional plagiarism by learning the techniques of writing and the correct ways of borrowing, paraphrasing, quoting and other uses of information from various sources. The institution can play its part by first making clear its own definition of plagiarism and the students need to be not only informed but also trained into using the appropriate conversions of information and ideas into their academic writing. Offering compulsory courses and workshops can help students overcome the uncertainty of what is expected of them in their academic writing practices. Just as a study from the literature reveals such confusion in the words of one student:

"It's really confusing. We're told we need to research and not rely on our own ideas and then we're told our essays have to be original and not rely just on what we've read." (Dawson, 2004, p. 6)

#### *Pressurizing Circumstances*

Plagiarism also happens due to constant, excessive pressure to write and perform. Pressure from educators, supervisors, pressure to meet deadlines, pressure to perform well (get good grades) or graduate on time can also lead to such practice. 'Abdullah recognized the difficulties of writing academically. He mentioned language barriers for students whose first language is not English, difficulty to switch between formal and informal styles of speech, as well as the demands of our educational system that are often not realistic and do not cater to different levels of students, creating this way, difficult circumstances that pressurize the students and force them to find the solution in committing such offences as plagiarism. 'Abdullah added that searching for knowledge should not be to the extent where one should be pressurized into being unethical just to reach certain standards set by other institutions. Playing its part into doing things differently, doing things in a more loving and caring way, and valuing *quality above quantity* would not lower the prestige of an institution. Rather, such institution can produce academic writers of high quality, with personal integrity without the need to pressurize them and force them to fall into unethical practices.

The pressure to write and publish for the purpose of promotion was mentioned as well by Hassan. He viewed this pressure under the financial dimension by stating that looking at some people who write and get promoted through dishonest means, receiving not only higher status but also financial incentives, serves as a psycho-emotional factor that can pressurize one into plagiarism.

#### *Educators' Unprofessionalism*

The degree to which students engage in the practice of plagiarism is as well influenced by the degree of their educators' un/professionalism. 'Aishah asserted that plagiarism is happening more because of the lecturers rather than students. When asked to elaborate on this opinion she listed some of her lecturers' unprofessional behavior, such as carelessness about the technical side of writing, failure to even read the assignments, and unethical assessment based on the number of pages written or other irrelevant criteria. She also added that they fail to provide the students with a good example since their own practice is not an ethical one. The same point about the lecturers' unprofessional behavior was highlighted as well from 'Abdullah in his example of the lecturer who was caught copying everything from the Internet. He also mentioned one of his friends being in a critical



situation of exceeding his study period because his supervisor was always “very busy” to check his work and help him complete his theses.

This sub-theme occurred as well in Hassan’s discussion when he suggested that supervisors can play their role by “following up” their students’ work step-by-step and detect any forms of plagiarism at a very early stage, because when a student “disappears for one year” and suddenly comes up with a “full theses”, it means that the “lecturers are not doing their job well”. Another point that brought up educators’ unprofessional behavior was his example of lecturers and supervisors who “misuse their students’ coursework” by asking them to include their name in their papers without contributing to it, so that they can benefit from its publication. Thus, all these forms of unprofessional behavior on the side of educators serve as a strong reason that can influence students’ engagement in the unethical practice of plagiarism.

Therefore, the only way to transfer values and make an impact in students’ mind and behavior is for the educators to provide a model that can be followed by the students. Townley and Parsell (2005) recognize that we are facing this situation because instructors have also failed to,

...engage students, to offer clear exemplary guidance, to promote a “love of wisdom” and a respect for academic virtues, including trust, reciprocity and community. But most of all, we must address the failure to provide a clear and robust model of academic attribution in a world where the very notions of intellectual ownership and plagiarism are cloudy (p. 276).

This shows that the irresponsibility of an educator has a stronger effect on students’ behavior than what might have a talk on plagiarism. When the Prophet of Islam (p.b.u.h.) propagated his message, he was the best example with a character that mirrored what he preached in every thought, word, or deed. This is denoted in the concept of *Murabbi*, whereby the educator must live up to what he/she says and teaches others to do. Allah says in the Holy Qur’an: “O you who believe, why do you say what you do not do? It is most hateful to Allah for you to say what you do not do” (Qur’an, Surah al-Saff, 61:2- 3).

#### *Educational Policy*

The way the educational institution imposes rules and regulations on both students and staff can also play a role on students’ academic behavior. ‘Aishah said that the institution should have rules and regulations, which should be followed by the students and the lecturers alike because the lecturers are also engaged into research and only if they practice good academic behavior they can teach the students to do so as well. ‘Abdullah stressed on the side of the equality of the rules and regulations whereby all should be the same before the law, regardless of their position. He asserted that if the rules are not fair and bent for certain people then there’s no point in having rules and regulations in the first place.

Hassan also said that the rules and regulations should be very strict and there should be no toleration for this kind of negative practice in an academic institution, be it Islamic or non- Islamic. He also said that these rules should be applied in the same way to all the faculties within the institution. When some *Kulliyah* or departments are strict and some others lenient, although the institutional polices condemn plagiarism, we will not be able to see the desired results. The zero-tolerance policy of the academic institution was also proposed by Ibrahim and Ahmad as a solution to the problem of plagiarism.

#### *Injustice*

Injustice breeds injustice. Thus, an educational system that does not treat all equally and with justice cannot be expected to produce students of integrity and with good moral and ethical conduct. The essence of this sub-theme came from Ibrahim’s discussion on the reasons that lead students to engage in the practice of plagiarism. He mentioned marginalization as a factor that leaves some people with few options to succeed in their life.

The same point about injustice was highlighted by ‘Abdullah in his example of the lecturer who used this inequality in the educational institution to save himself from punishment in the case he would get caught by inviting as co-authors some influential people, who would serve as his protectors to get away with his dishonest behavior. Therefore, the educational system and the institutions should establish justice to all parties and for all aspects of education in order to be able to create a healthy academic environment.

#### *Worldview and Philosophy*

An educational system that holds a certain worldview and philosophy in its roots should, theoretically and practically, set all its standards in accordance with this worldview and philosophy. Therefore, ‘Abdullah suggested that instead of looking at established universities, such as Oxford and so on, we should look back at the Muslim scholarly system and learn from them about the method as well as the ethics of seeking and producing knowledge.

Thus, an Islamic educational system should be built on pillars of standards, principles, values, and means obtained from the Islamic worldview. Pillars imported from another educational system, however established and of good reputation that system might be, which is based on a different worldview, would be contradicting and create confusion in the application of those standards, principles and values. An institution that claims to hold *Islamic principles* in its roots, should abide by those principles by first asking the questions, what are our intentions, why are we searching for knowledge, how should we go about searching for that knowledge? Searching for knowledge should not be to the extent where one should be pressurized into being unethical just to reach certain *standards* set by other institutions, that even though might be of higher prestige, do not hold the same principles as an Islamic institution. ‘Abdullah expresses his frustration:

I think the pressure, the pressure to publish, the pressure to perform, the pressure to keep up as the number of publication year after year. I think we should review it...it's about time we do things in a more sane manner (laugh). I'm sorry, I think this is some form of madness...(I 2; DU 84)

'Aishah and Hassan also highlighted the importance of an Islamic educational system where acquisition of knowledge is seen as a noble pursuit and where the intention of research is to contribute to knowledge. An Islamic educational system should be able to instill on the students the kind of self – consciousness, which would help them acquire knowledge not only by learning skills but integrate them with a noble character and moral conduct.

Offering her perspective on plagiarism, Yusof (2009) has warned about direct borrowing of definitions and policies from other universities without thinking whether they fit or not in our own contexts. Although she stressed on cultural differences that should be paid attention too, she said that by borrowing the concepts without adapting them to our own perspectives, “we have simply “plagiarized” those concepts into our educational system” and are bound to expect problems contradictions to occur.

#### **Personal Attitude**

In this theme were included all traits of students' personality that can lead them towards the practice of plagiarism. The analysis of the qualitative textual data revealed that students fall into such practice because of their personal attitudes such as irresponsibility, untruthfulness to their work, complacency, dishonesty, and time mismanagement, which were highlighted by 'Aishah. 'Abdullah listed time mismanagement, lack of confidence, and lack of language and writing skills as personal reasons that students plagiarized, while Hassan and Ahmad talked about dishonesty, laziness, and moral identity. Ibrahim mentioned beside laziness, the cheating attitude and taking the easy way out.

In the literature, cases where plagiarism occurs intentionally due to students' personal attitude are considered intolerable. These types of students do not take seriously the responsibility of being a student and complying with the academic requirements, thus, they succumb to this practice, deceiving this way, not only their professors but also themselves. Jonathan Malesic (2006, inside Williams, 2008), an assistant professor of theology at King's College in Pennsylvania, feeling insulted by the students' plagiarism says:

A student who plagiarizes refuses to be educated. There shouldn't be room in my classroom for that kind of student. Indeed, that person is not a student at all (p. 51).

Therefore, among all the factors that influence the plagiarizing behavior, the factors that are related to the personal attitudes of students are regarded as the most irresponsible ones, which cannot be justified, and which deserve not to be tolerated in any case in the world of academia.

#### **Social Pressure**

Besides the other reasons that were mentioned above, social pressure emerged as a factor that influences as well one's decision to practice plagiarism. Hassan mentioned the effect of social pressure in two instances. The first occurrence was in the case when students are pressurized by their family or friends to study in a field or area, which they are not familiar with, or which they do not like. This “forced” choice might serve as a factor that can lead the students to either lack motivation, or feel that it is above their abilities to complete their studies in that particular area. Overcome by these feelings and at the same time not wanting to disappoint their families, they find the option of practicing plagiarism as the most tempting one.

The second occurrence of the idea of social pressure was when Hassan talked about the defense mechanism used against the feeling of inferiority. When students feel that their peers are doing better than them in terms of performance, or in the case of lecturers, when others are being promoted through the large number of their publications, they are tempted to plagiarize so that they can show that they can do it, which would help them to overcome the feeling of inferiority towards their colleagues. The same idea was expressed as well from 'Abdullah when he said, he felt pressurized by his friends and this kind of pressure made the option to plagiarize cross his mind in a few instances, but it was his sense of Religiosity and fear of Allah, which helped him refrain from this temptation.

Relationship between students' academic dishonesty and pressure from family and society to gain a certain status is found by Storm and Storm (2007), where they revealed that students may be motivated to cheat by the pressure to excel and in order to be able to get into a good college. In the same way, Bushweller (1999) has highlighted the competitiveness and desire to be ahead of others as a factor that influences dishonest and cheating behaviors among students.

#### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The findings of this study revealed that the issue of plagiarism in academic writing is a very complex issue and can be influenced by various factors, which often are interconnected in their contribution towards this behavior. The mix method of analysis provided valuable insights on the students' attitudes towards plagiarism, the factors that influenced their engagement in this behavior, and the strategies that can be used to minimize its practice in the academic environments.

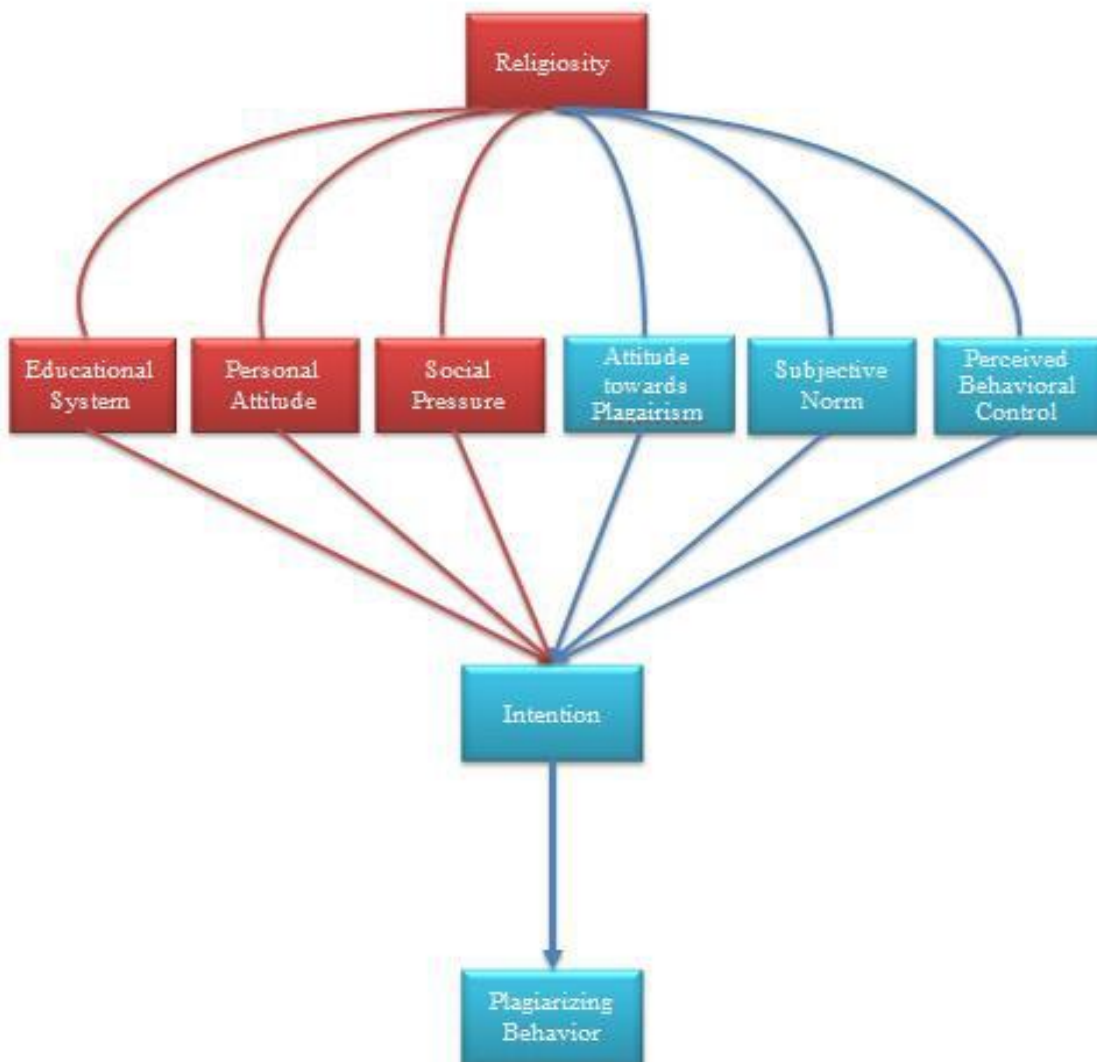
Students revealed a negative attitude towards plagiarism and its practitioners. They considered it an unacceptable behavior, amounting to cheating and stealing, an intolerable act, and a grave wrong. The people who engage in such behavior were also seen as dishonest, irresponsible, untruthful, and lacking in their moral identity. From an Islamic point of view plagiarism was as well considered to be against the Islamic principles of honesty and *Amanah* (trust); contradicting the concepts of *Barakah* (blessing) and *Ummah* (Muslim Community); and leading one away from the pleasure of Allah (swt).

Both methods of this study discovered that students show support for the punishment of plagiarism, although there was recognition that there are different types of plagiarism, as well as different degrees of the offence. Thus, the punishment should be done accordingly, with justice and equality for all, and only after the necessary measures are taken, such as creating awareness about plagiarism and training on quality academic writing, in order to avoid unintentional involvement into this practice.

With regard to the reasons and factors that lead to the practice of plagiarism, concerning the determined factors, derived from the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), the Multiple Regression Analysis revealed that among the three factors, namely, Attitude towards Plagiarism, Subjective Norm, and Perceived Behavioral Control, the variable that made the highest contribution to the Intention to plagiarize was Perceived Behavioral Control. However, the most contributing factor towards the actual plagiarizing Behavior was Subjective Norm. The qualitative inquiry of open-ended questions also found the Perceived Behavioral Control to be the main factor that contributes towards the practice of plagiarism.

The fact that the Theory of Planned Behavior explained 33.2 per cent of the variance towards the Intention to plagiarize, and 28.1 per cent of the variance towards the actual plagiarizing Behavior leads us to assume that 66.8 per cent of Intention and 71.9 percent of Behavior are explained by other factors. The qualitative phase of the research provided us with very substantial evidence about these other influencing elements, which led the author to make significant amendments to the initial model. The revised model of plagiarizing behavior is presented in Figure 2.

**Figure 2. The Revised Model of Plagiarizing Behavior (Note: The elements in blue color were retained from the initial framework, while the elements in red color are the emerging factors found by this research)**



The revised model gives a more holistic view on understanding the issue of plagiarism in academic writing by illustrating all the important themes that need to be taken into consideration while dealing with this issue. Thus, the factors that influence the practice of this behavior are Religiosity, Educational System, Personal Attitude, and Social Pressure, as well as Attitude towards Plagiarism, Subjective Norm, and Behavioral Control.

The most influential factor that emerged in this study was the students' *Religiosity*. Concepts, such as *Amanah* (Trust/worthiness), *Taqwa* (God-Consciousness), *Iman* (Faith), and *Ummah* (Community), encompassed within this theme, played a very important role that guided students' intention, as well as their actual behavior to stay away from unethical and dishonest behaviors, such as plagiarism. In fact, Religiosity was visualized as an umbrella and seemed to affect every aspect of the issue, just as Islam is not only a religion but a system that covers every aspect of a human's life. Thus, this research recommends that the campaigns of awareness should be able to highlight the Islamic consciousness and create for the students a visible connection between their religious belief and the unethical behavior of plagiarism. Moreover, the Religiosity should be always taken into consideration whenever Muslim population is involved in the research.

The *Educational System* also emerged as a major factor that influences plagiarizing behavior, comprising of six other sub-themes. *Lack of Awareness* was considered to be the main reason that leads the students to plagiarize. *Pressurizing Circumstances* as well as the *Educators' Unprofessionalism* and failure to provide a good example and role model did also play their part in students' plagiarism. Besides, the institutional *Policy* along with *Injustice* in the educational system had their contribution towards this unethical behavior. Last but not least, it is the ability of the educational system to uphold and be based on principles and standards that are in conformity with its *Worldview and Philosophy*. Thus, this paper suggests that there is a clear need for revision of the academic system to look for possible discrepancies and contradictions with its worldview, to gain and maintain professionalism of its staff, to practice justice and fair policy, and above all to create all the necessary awareness on the highly complex issue of plagiarism.

*Personal Attitude* plays also an important role in students' plagiarizing behavior. Personality traits such as irresponsibility, untruthfulness, complacency, dishonesty, laziness, time mismanagement, lack of confidence, and moral identity were seen as some of the reasons that lead students to plagiarize in their academic writing, and were at the same time considered as the most unacceptable justifications that deserve no tolerance in the world of academia.

*Social Pressure*, indicated by pressure from family to be in a certain area of study, as well as pressure to perform and be either better than, or at least equal to the others, serves as well as a stimulus that can affect students' intention to plagiarize. Students who are anxious to get a certain status or position in the eyes of the society or their family tend to opt for plagiarism in order to achieve their ambitions. In the world of academia, it is recommended that, when awareness and education have been sufficiently provided, justifications such as these along with students' personal attitudes mentioned above, must indeed receive little acceptance from the institutions, but above all from the students of knowledge who are expected to be society's experts of tomorrow.

The limitations of this study come from the fact that it involves self-reported data about a negative behavior. Self-reported data cannot be independently verified and they simply rely on the honesty of the participants, who might in the case of a negative behavior give the answer that is socially or morally acceptable, instead of portraying the real situation. To minimize the effect of this limitation the author took strict measures of validity and reliability of the research instruments.

To analyze the quantitative data, this study made use of Multiple Regression Analysis (MRA), which could not test the Model of Planned Behavior as a whole. Thus, the test was performed in two phases, the first towards Intention, and the second towards Behavior. While the author intended to fill this gap through the qualitative findings, future research could possibly use more advanced analysis, such as Structured Equation Modelling (SEM) to analyze the data, as well as to statistically test the new factors that emerged from this study.

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