Printing and internet plagiarism: Aspect of students' perception and willingness to perform acts of plagiarism while writing an academic essay / Eti Yaari

Abstract:

The writing of an academic composition is one of the goals inter alia, which face students within the framework of their academic studies. In this goal, the students are required to demonstrate rich wording and proper expression abilities, using various sources of information. In addition, they must apply the accepted rules of citation and to refrain from the presentation of ideas or words of others as their own, a phenomenon known as plagiarism.

The goal of the present research was to examine the students' perception and their willingness to carry out two prevalent expressions of this phenomenon: The first, "The non indication of quotation marks in verbatim quoting", that is, the copying of a section of text from the original and its insertion into the body of a composition, designating a reference but with no quotation marks enclosing the quoted text. The second, "Non bestowal of credit to the author", that is to say, paraphrasing of an existing piece of text, while maintaining the central argument and its manner of presentation, and its insertion into the body of a composition, without stipulating the source.

The research examined three concept indexes. The first, the level of knowledge of the phenomenon, which was defined as the ability of the student, after having been given the source document, to identify plagiarized expressions in a given passage, and to correctly explain the identification. The second, the attitude towards the behavior, which is the student's positive or negative assessment of the described behavior. The third, the concept of accepted standards, that is, the degree to which a student thinks that the behavior is widespread and accepted amongst his peers and friends at the university.

Three questions and assumptions were derived from the goal.

The first question was to examine how the phenomenon was perceived in the eyes of the students. The second question examined the differences in the perception of plagiarism of printing sources as opposed to plagiarism of Internet sources. The third question dealt with the finding of the best way to describe *a* system of links between the variables of the research.

The three assumptions of the research assessed that a correlation will be found between the three student concept indexes and their willingness.

284 students, who were selected in a multi stage sampling, responded to the questionnaire, which was especially composed for the purpose of this research. The questionnaire was made up of four different cases. Each description commenced with the presentation of a written passage, taken from an existing original composition, and thereafter the student's version, as written in his project. This version included the plagiarized use of the original passage.

The four descriptions were differentiated by a unique combination of the plagiarized expression and the type of source from which it was plagiarized. After each description, a series of set questions, with respect to the students' concepts and their willingness to carry out similar deeds, appeared.

The findings indicate that the students' level of knowledge with respect to the rules of citation is very low. This was expressed by the low numbers of examinees who correctly identified and reasoned the predicament in the student's version. From amongst the two expressions which were examined, the level of knowledge was found to be higher in all matters relating to "Non bestowal of credit to the author". In addition, the description of the incident, which dealt with plagiarism from printed sources, was perceived as going against the rules more than similar descriptions, plagiarized from Internet sources.

The three assumptions of the research were supported, that is, a correlation was found between perception indexes and the willingness. Although, the model, drafted in accordance with these assumptions did not match the observations of the research.

Therefore, a new theoretical model was built to describe the system of links between the variables of the research.

The model reveals that the level of knowledge distinctively contributes to the prediction of the willingness. Examinees who correctly identified the plagiarized expressions, expressed a reduced willingness to do the deed.
In contrast to what was assumptive in the original model, the linear combination between the level of knowledge and the willingness was found to contribute to both the prediction of the position with respect to behavior and to the prediction of the perception of accepted norms. It is possible that these findings result from the difficulty in assessing the frequency of the phenomenon amongst other students and the lack of a consolidated stance with respect to this phenomenon.

These matters were discussed in depth within the framework of the discussion and a number of ideas for continued research were raised. In addition, the limitations of the research and its contribution to the theoretical, the research and application fields were mentioned.

The findings of the research emphasize time after time the need to provide training on the correct method of quoting, its objectives and the principles of intellectual property, especially in all matters of using online information. This step is a milestone in the contention with the phenomenon and in its power to assist in the reduction of its extent in the academic world in the immediate term.

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