

Impact of Librarian's Role in Promoting Academic Integrity within the University

Ranawella, T C^{1*}

¹General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University, Sri Lanka

*thanuja@kdu.ac.lk

Abstract

Academic integrity means demonstrating moral behaviour and honesty in all academic work. When maintaining academic integrity, librarians can play an important role in university contexts in educating the user community and introducing the latest technological enhancements such as plagiarism detection software. In 2015, Turnitin was introduced to General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University (KDU) as a plagiarism detection software. At the same time, the library staff of the KDU was involved in promoting academic integrity by conducting Library Orientation Programmes, teaching information literacy, conducting workshops on avoiding plagiarism, citing, and reference management tools. The objective of the study was to identify the impact of the involvement of library staff in promoting academic integrity within KDU. Analysis was done using 22793 Turnitin similarity reports produced within the last six (6) years (2015-2020) by the KDU library. Twenty-five percentage (25%) of similarity was taken as a threshold to analyze the similarity percentage in the work produced by students. The data revealed that the number of reports below the 25% threshold gradually increased from 30.2% to 60.2% during this period. This implies that students may now have some understanding of how to avoid plagiarism. This is an indication that the role played by the KDU Library in promoting academic integrity has a positive impact. However, due to the high volume of reports received by the KDU Library, a qualitative analysis of the reports has not been conducted. A similarity report below the threshold level does not guarantee that the relevant student has not plagiarized. There can be instances of plagiarism in a report with any similarity percentage. Also, a report with a high similarity percentage may not contain plagiarized content but instances of poor citations. Therefore, it is also the responsibility of academics to go through individual reports of their students to detect plagiarism.

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