



EXPLORING THE HIDDEN RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND DIGITAL PLAGIARISM: PRIMARY MOTIVES AND APPLICABLE REMEDIES

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ABSTRACT

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Social media in particular and technology in general have had a significant impact on the process of learning. In this regard, social media has many educational advantages, but it also raises a number of problems. One of the problems is digital plagiarism, which prompts an inquiry into it to determine the primary drivers of this phenomenon and come up with feasible ways to eradicate it. The data was gathered from 264 EFL students at Dhar Mehrez University, Sais University, and Moulay Ismail University in Morocco who satisfactorily participated in an online survey. The quantitative and qualitative data that was gathered revealed that social media is the most popular arena for EFL students to plagiarize since they freely admit that it is simple for them to do so; the only difference is how frequently. The results of the study further demonstrated that there are various variables that lead EFL students to plagiarize, including poor research skills, a lack of interest in the assignments, anxiety about failing, and inadequate time management skills. Some EFL students look for methods that mitigate the risk of digital plagiarism, such as paraphrasing, source citation, and plagiarism detection applications.

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INTRODUCTION

According to Chaffey (2019), social media is a tremendous element of modern life. In 2019, more than 3.4 billion people worldwide were active social media users, accounting for 45% of the world's population. Young adults' use of social media is increasing along with the prevalence of mobile devices. Young adults (18 to 24 years old) specifically have been noted to utilize a range of channels, but especially Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and YouTube. In this respect, Rahmati (2016) stated that in order to contact and attract potential students, several academic institutions have turned to social media. Despite the fact that social media has expanded promptly over the past ten years, its position in educational programs for higher education is still a bit fuzzy. Ineffective use of social media by many



faculty members results in their efforts being dispersed and misdirected (Dzvapatsva, sMitrovic, & Dietrich, 2014)

As mentioned by Zinec and Lavbic (2017), the accessibility of laptops and smartphones on a large scale, as well as the amount of content available online, have altered how teaching and learning are handled. Due to the aforementioned changes, plagiarism has also increased significantly over the past few years. In this regard, Youmans (2011) explained that the unethical practice of duplicating another person's work is known as plagiarism and is typically regarded as a crime. Anderson and Steneck (2011) added that the concepts and additions that researchers make to the body of knowledge form the foundation of their careers. Therefore, it should come as expected that plagiarism is considered by the research community to be an unacceptable violation of the standards of research. It is a personal insult and an act of hostility toward the person who came up with the original concept or words. Thus, so as to do a better job of dealing with the rising quantity of plagiarism, we need to strengthen the procedures that are in place for detecting it.

Writing research papers relies on the latest state of literature by integrating concepts from several writers (Pecorari & Petric, 2014). This is a method that is regulated by the normal procedures that an author must adhere to, with ethically defined rules communicated to avoid plagiarism allegations (Pecorari, 2008). In this context, a growing number of easily accessible and easily plagiarized sources are now available because of the development of the Internet in the past few years (Hu & Lei, 2012). Plagiarism is becoming more common, which has raised serious issues in the world of academia. Consequently, this article will discuss one of the most hotly debated subjects, namely the use of social media for digital plagiarism. Its aim is to spread awareness among EFL students about research misconduct and academic theft.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The evolution of social media

According to Reimherr (2014), social media, which has only been around for a short while, has developed from a way to connect with loved ones and friends to a common means of online communication that numerous learners prefer to make use of. As reported by Joseph et al. (2019), social media really took off in 1997 when Six Degrees, a newly released website, enabled members to generate profiles and discover friends. In this regard, blogging and instant messaging became common methods for people to utilize the internet for networking purposes with the launch of Six Degrees. Through the early 2000s, the internet spread more widely, and in 2003, MySpace emerged as a well-liked social media site where consumers could set up profiles and connect with friends. As a platform for Harvard students to build profiles and engage with one another, Mark Zuckerberg introduced Facebook in 2004. As it gained popularity among Harvard students, Zuckerberg and outside shareholders saw the site's potential on a larger scale and made it accessible to everyone (History, n.d.).

Joseph et al. (2019) added that in reaction to the widespread use of cellphones and text messaging, Twitter was founded in 2006. Twitter was distinctive due to the fact that it permitted individuals to pass



out 140-character messages, or tweets, to the rest of the entire world. A number of new social media platforms, such as photo-sharing websites like Photobucket and Instagram, as well as microblogging websites like Tumblr and Plurk, appeared in 2010, after Facebook and Twitter had already made a significant dent in the market. Social media also started to gain popularity at this time, particularly among educational institutions, and the adoption of social media profiles by colleges and universities for marketing and recruitment purposes has persisted.

Gensler et al. (2013) mentioned that social media has made a tremendous impact on education; that is to say, social media has replaced the traditional perspective of technology in the classroom as a means of content consumption. Students frequently express and debate their thoughts about schools, programs, and concerns on social media platforms. Consequently, this could have a big impact on an educational institution's image. (Berthon, et al 2012).

Social media incorporation in the learning environment

Bergland (2014) pointed out that social media's significance in today's classrooms is undeniable given that the majority of young adults consume it. However, because of its rapid expansion, there is a lot of ambiguity surrounding it, particularly with regard to curriculum. Some people still question whether social media should be utilized in the classroom and, if so, how. A number of professors are confused about how and where exactly to integrate social media into their courses, assignments, and other formative evaluations. The question of whether social media should be a key component of a learning plan has been met with opposition due to a lack of understanding of social media's formats and objectives. In the words of Greenhow et al. (2017), despite faculty members' expertise in disciplines where social media is employed (such as journalism, marketing, and business), social media has not been widely used in traditional academic settings.

Definitions of plagiarism

Singh et al. (2020) explained that the Latin term "plagiare," meaning to kidnap or abduct, is the root of the English word "plagiarism." In this context, plagiarism is the act of using another person's words, ideas, thoughts, or expressions without referencing the original author. Simply put, we must provide proper acknowledgment to the original author whenever we use someone else's work in our research. Academic theft is another name for plagiarism, which is unacceptable in the academic community. By honoring the original source, we are acting ethically and safely because research misconduct is an extremely serious crime that carries fines, suspensions, and legal repercussions according to the applicable national or international legislation. Country-to-country variations exist.

Sadruddin (2021) defined plagiarism as an act of misrepresenting one's own thoughts or works as those of another. It is theft of intellectual property when someone produces a fake authorship claim. In this vein, Anderson and Steneck (2011) added that plagiarism is a significant breach of scientific ethics and



a type of research misconduct. It involves portraying someone else's thoughts or words as one's own without giving due credit to the genuine author.

Types of plagiarism

Singh et al. (2020) mentioned that plagiarism can come in different flavors. First, direct plagiarism, sometimes referred to as verbatim plagiarism, is when a researcher uses the same precise phrases as another person's work without giving due credit or utilizing quote marks. Second, paraphrasing plagiarism is the most prevalent kind of plagiarism; this is why it needs more attention. This kind of plagiarism occurs when someone uses another person's writings but makes slight adjustments to the grammar or sentence structure without changing the major idea or content. Third, self-plagiarism occurs when an author uses a portion or the entirety of a work that has already been published without providing credit or citation. Self-plagiarism, or auto-plagiarism, is the term used to describe this. Even though it is the author's original work, the owner must give credit when using a portion of it in subsequent academic or research papers; otherwise, it will be seen as auto-plagiarism. Fourth, accidental plagiarism, which happens when an author disregards or fails to cite sources or inadvertently paraphrases a source by using similar phrases or sentences without offering proper credit, is also regarded as unethical in research writing and must be circumvented with the goal of producing more just and ethical writing that is good for society. Fifth, mosaic plagiarism, also known as patch writing, is a form of plagiarism that is difficult to spot because it occurs when a researcher or student deliberately uses another person's exact words or text in their writings without giving due credit. It carries severe repercussions and is regarded as academic misconduct.

Causes of plagiarism

Even before the advent of the Internet, Ashworth et al. (1997) identified four key elements that influence students' decisions to plagiarize: a) the students' lack of knowledge that they are plagiarizing; b) the low likelihood that they will be caught; c) the pressure brought on by the volume of requests; and d) the actual composition of the assignments that the teachers provide. These elements are still important because an additional research study by Eret and Ok (2014) found that a propensity to plagiarize increased with the rise of the Internet and cited time constraints, heavy workloads, and the difficulty of the suggested tasks as the primary causes of plagiarism. In this review, students were well aware of what plagiarism was and that it was improper to utilize it, according to a recent study by Hussein et al. (2016). In a 2015 study, Kauffman and Young examined how attitudes regarding plagiarism were impacted by how simple it was to obtain copy and paste tools and how tasks were presented. Clearly, the majority of research concurs that information availability has become so instantaneous that some consider it "common knowledge" that anybody can replicate (Walker, 2010).

There are cultural differences in how plagiarism is seen and embraced (Sowden, 2005). In this vein, Rinnert & Kobayashi, (2005) stated that the problem with authors who write in a second language is



likely that they don't have a strong enough oversight of the language, which can make them unsure about how they use it and compel them to rely too heavily on the original texts.

Plagiarism solutions

In order to address the basis of the plagiarism issue, it is vital to look past its outward manifestations (Macdonald & Carroll, 2006). All of the elements that lead to plagiarism are reduced to a defect in the plagiarists themselves, who lack the academic integrity, good intent, and expertise required to use the sources effectively (Pecorari, 2008).

Source citation and paraphrasing are seen as two essential methods to prevent plagiarism in the Anglo-American academic community (Park, 2003). The second one involves a high demand for knowledge and linguistic skill, but the first one is rather straightforward and may be completed with proper training (Keck, 2010). The rules for what constitutes a paraphrase vary widely among academic leaders and researchers. While some people hold the opinion that, in order to avoid plagiarism, there should be no evidence of the copied text, not even a few words from the source (Benos et al., 2005; Roig, 2001), others adopt softer standards that permit the insertion of additional sources in a paraphrase (Keck, 2006).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research problem

Digital plagiarism has a significant and varying impact on colleges and universities, which cannot be disregarded. Plagiarism, therefore, has been a major issue for educational institutions in Morocco for an extended period of time, and it is now even more accessible because of modern technologies. On this view, the crux of the research issue is that most EFL students are aware that plagiarism, or representing someone else's work as your own, is absolutely forbidden and constitutes dishonesty in academia. However, it is possible for someone to accidentally commit plagiarism by replicating another person's work without giving due credit to the original author or by making minor changes to another person's work. This is why it is very critical for EFL students to comprehend what digital plagiarism is and how to prevent it to maintain good academic standing

Research objectives

Following the discussion highlighted above, a couple of objectives have been developed. In general, the study was aimed at exploring the hidden connection between the usage of social media and web-based plagiarism. The objectives were:

- To ascertain whether social media is a factor in digital plagiarism or not.
- To find out the primary root causes of digital plagiarism.
- To figure out some practical countermeasures to prevent digital plagiarism.

Research questions

The following questions were addressed by the current study:

- Q1: Can social media play a role in digital plagiarism?
- Q2: What are the main underlying reasons for digital plagiarism?
- Q3: What are some effective safeguards against digital plagiarism?

Research instrument

An internet-based survey was employed as a means of gathering data for the study. A segment with quantitative questions and a segment with qualitative questions were both included.

Sample and setting

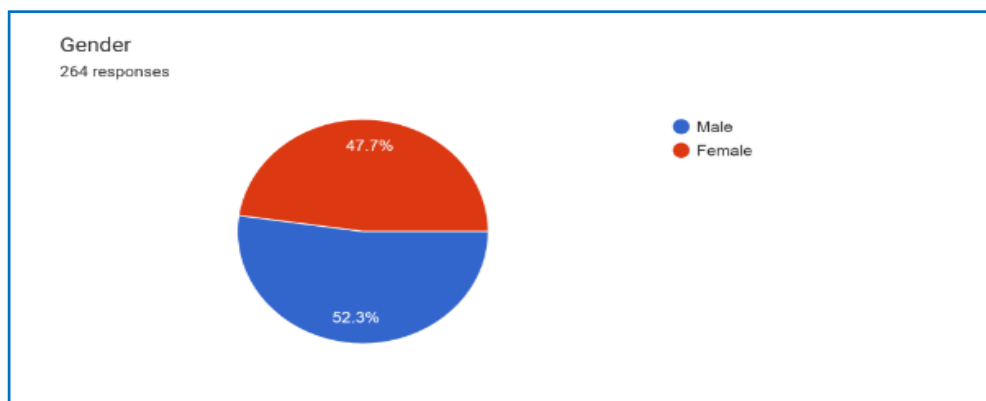


Fig 1: Participants by Gender

Figure 1 proved that 264 EFL students from three universities in Morocco (Dhar Mehraz University, Sais University, and Moulay Ismail University) successfully finished the online survey. There are 126 female students and 138 male students.

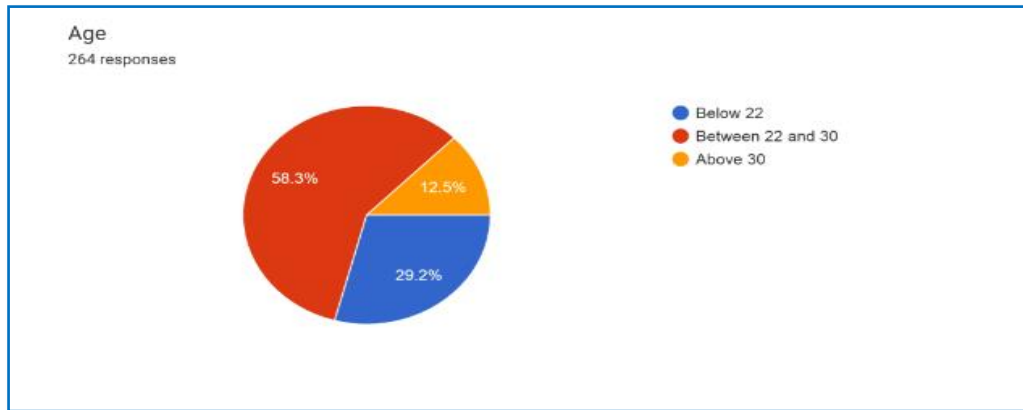


Fig 2: Participants by Age

As shown in Figure 2, 154 of those surveyed are between the ages of 22 and 30, 33 are over 30, and 77 are under 22.

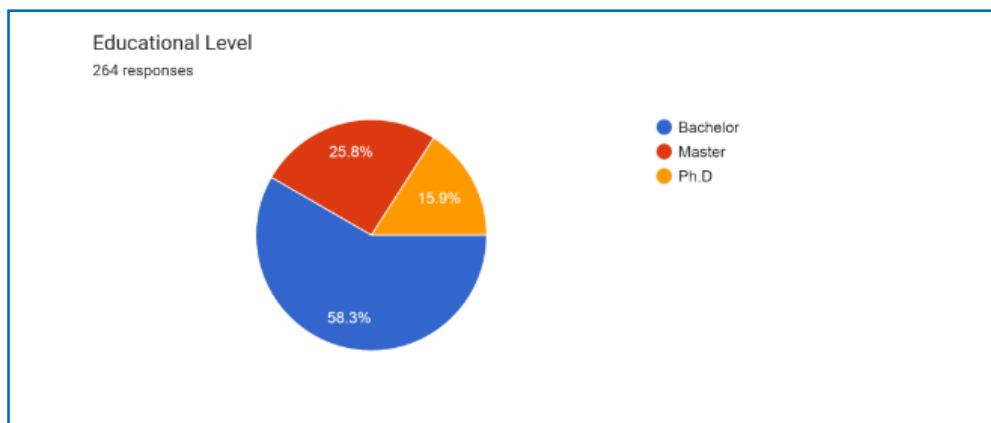


Fig 3: Participants' Educational Level

According to Figure 3, 154 EFL students are enrolled in bachelor's programs, 68 are enrolled in master's programs, while 42 are pursuing their Ph.D.

Data analysis

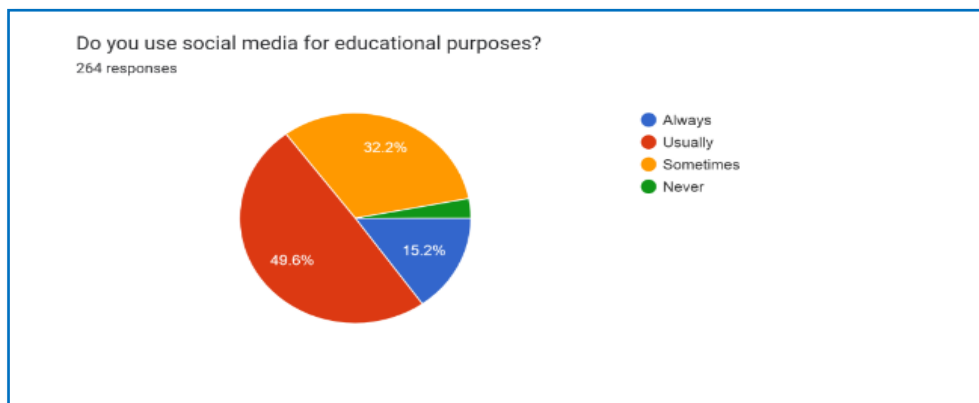


Fig 4: Participants' Usage of Social Media for Learning

Figure 4 revealed that 131 EFL students, representing a higher proportion of 94.6%, claimed they usually utilize social media for instructional purposes. While 40 EFL students always utilize it, and 85 EFL students some times. Eight EFL students, regrettably, admitted that they never use social media for learning. Figure 4 clearly demonstrated that practically all EFL students employ social media for learning purposes.

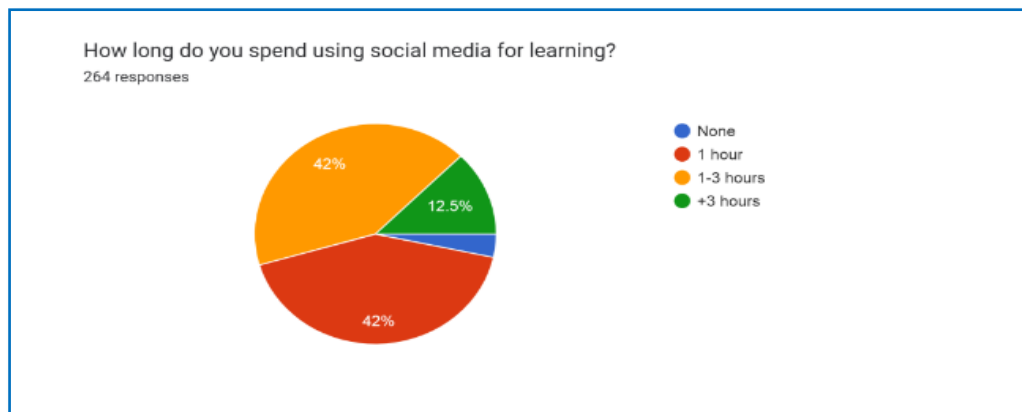


Fig 5: Participants ' Time Spent on Social Media for Learning

Figure 5 demonstrated that there is no difference in the proportion (42%) between those who use social media for one hour per day and those who use it for one to three hours (111 EFL students). 33 EFL students, however, claimed to have spent longer than three hours. Unfortunately, nine EFL students spent zero time on social media for learning. The majority of EFL students use social media for learning at varying rates, as shown in Figure 5.

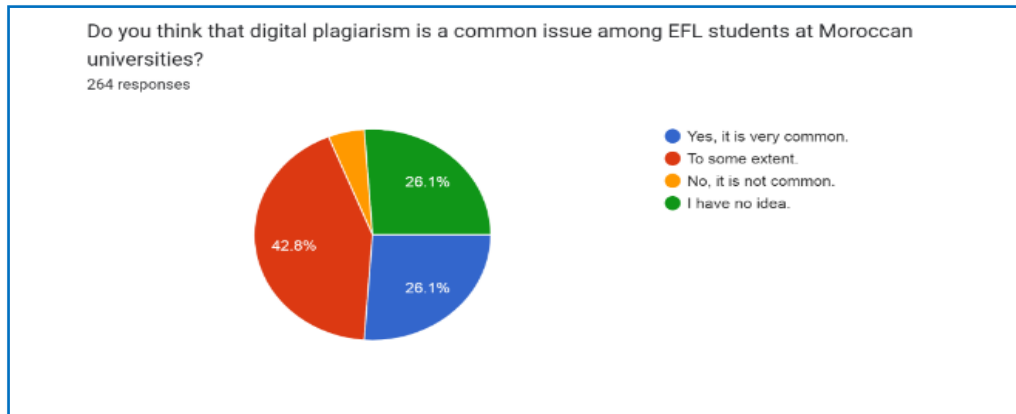


Fig 6: Participants' Beliefs regarding Digital Plagiarism as an Issue at Moroccan Universities

As to figure 6, the percentages of those who say they don't know (21.1%) and those who say digital plagiarism is a common issue at Moroccan universities match up (69 EFL students). Only 13 EFL students disagreed with the 113 EFL students who thought digital plagiarism was quite widespread in Moroccan universities. Figure 6 conclusively demonstrated the fact that the vast majority of EFL students consider digital plagiarism to be an ongoing issue at Moroccan universities.

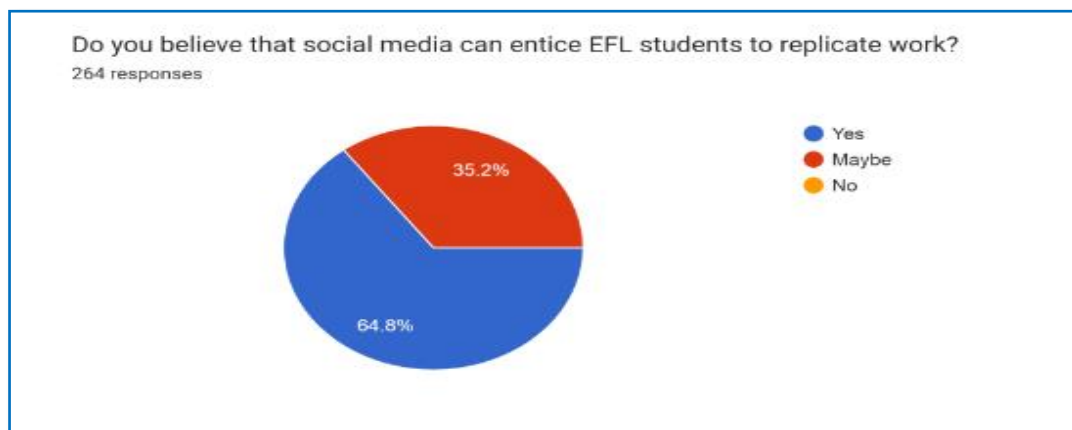


Fig 7: Participants' Opinions of the Plagiarizing Urge on Social Media

Figure 7 showed that a higher percentage of 64.8%, which represents 171 EFL students, strongly agreed that social media can be a major source of temptation for students to copy from others, while 93 EFL students admitted that they are unsure of the relationship between social media temptation and digital plagiarism. Nobody among the participants, however, asserted that social media could not serve as a source of enticement. Figure 7 plainly demonstrated that all EFL students hold the view that social media is the key tool that induces students to plagiarize.

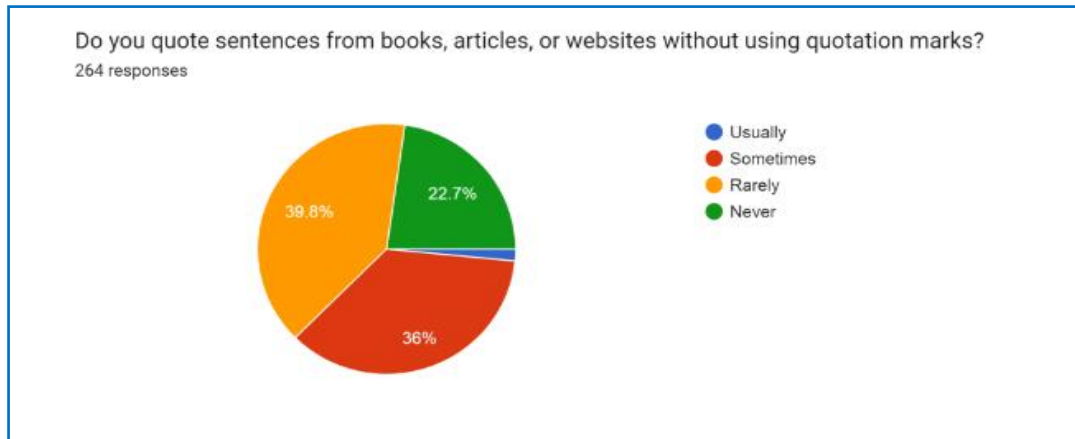


Fig 8: Participants' Level of Plagiarism

Figure 8 revealed that 60 EFL students never plagiarized, 95 EFL students occasionally, and 105 EFL students infrequently did so. Only four EFL students admitted that they usually disregard quotation marks when quoting passages from books, articles, or websites. Figure 8 made it quite clear that most EFL students utilize social media for plagiarism; the only thing that varies is how frequently.

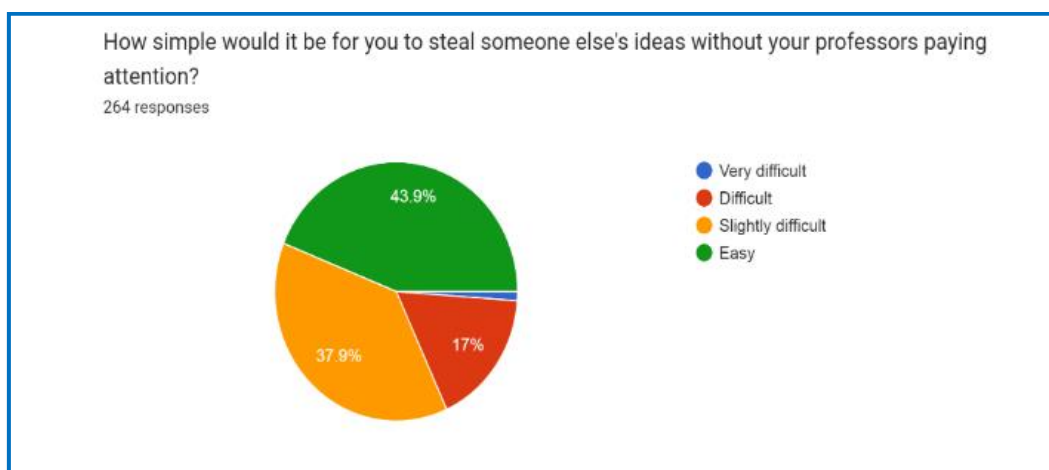


Fig 9: Participants' Flexibility to Copy without Drawing the Notice of Academics

Figure 9 shown that a bigger percentage—43.9%, or 116 EFL students—said it was simple for them to plagiarize, whereas 100 EFL students said it was only somewhat more difficult. Contrarily, only 45 EFL students and 3 EFL students, respectively, said it was challenging or very difficult. Figure overtly demonstrated that the majority of EFL students find it easy to plagiarize.

The rest of the inquiries on the survey were qualitative, which questioned EFL students about the primary root causes of plagiarism and some practical ways to avert it. In light of the analysis's finding that most EFL students plagiarize for a variety of reasons, participants' most frequent justifications for digital plagiarism are listed below:



- **Weak Research Skills:** Many EFL students reported enrolling in universities without sufficient dexterity to carry out in-depth research. They said that they had accidentally done research and copied things verbatim.
- **Uninterestingness in the Assignments:** The majority of EFL students admitted that they need motivation to finish their homework for a particular subject. As a result, they may occasionally lack enthusiasm and choose to combine knowledge from multiple sources without including any recently acquired data.
- **Anxiety about Failing:** Most EFL students acknowledged that the fear of obtaining a lower grade on an assignment or of failing to validate the subject can be a factor in digital plagiarism. This indicates that they believe that if they copy from a more trustworthy source, they will have a higher chance of passing the subject.
- **Poor Time Management Ability:** Some EFL students pointed out that while they might be able to finish independent tasks and come up with creative ideas, they have trouble managing their time. They postpone finishing work until the very last moment, and since the deadline is approaching, they end up plagiarizing from a variety of sources.

This study's additional important finding was that EFL students use several practical strategies that lessen the likelihood of plagiarism. The most often mentioned strategies by participants were as follows:

- **Paraphrasing:** A vast majority of EFL students demonstrated that properly rewriting a source's thoughts or facts into their own words without compromising their meaning, known as paraphrasing, is the most effective technique. They added that they rewrite and structure their writing in an original way without altering the original meaning of the topic, and they refrain from using too many words or phrases that are too similar to those in the source.
- **Source citation:** EFL students mentioned that they include a citation in their writing whenever they address a topic or term that is not owned by them. They include the full title of the source, when it first appeared, and any other components of citation that should be added. Additionally, they emphasized that whenever they use the exact words from the source, they use quotation marks around the original content.
- **Plagiarism Checker:** Some EFL students stated that they frequently return to an online plagiarism detection tool to figure out the amount of plagiarism whenever they have any doubts about certain words or sentences.

MAIN FINDINGS

The results of this study confirmed that:

- Almost all EFL students utilize social media for instructional purposes; the only difference is how frequently they use it.
- The majority of EFL students in Moroccan universities believe that digital plagiarism is a persistent problem, as they hold the view that social media is a prime place for students to do it.



- Digital plagiarism is generally regarded by EFL students as easy to commit. They do so for this reason, and the only variation is how often.
- The main motives behind digital plagiarism are weak research skills, a lack of interest in the assignments, anxiety about failing, and poor time management abilities.
- Some applicable remedies to lessen the risk of plagiarism are paraphrasing, source citation, and a plagiarism checker.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The outcome of this study succinctly concluded that social media use among EFL students has emerged as an emerging form of learning; nearly all EFL students employ it in their studies; the sole difference is in the degree to which they do so. Therefore, integrating social media into educational settings has upsides but also issues, one of which is the issue of digital plagiarism. EFL students in Moroccan universities still do not want to confess the fact that they occasionally plagiarize since they find it so simple to do it, but this is a hidden problem that has plagued the community. In this regard, the study further demonstrated that there are some factors, such as inadequate research skills, a lack of interest in the assignments, concern about failing, and ineffective time management skills, that induce EFL students to plagiarize. To reduce the possibility of digital plagiarism, some EFL students seek out some strategies to diminish the risk of digital plagiarism, such as paraphrasing, source citation, and plagiarism detection tools.

The study's findings were in line with what I expected as a researcher and a user of social media, which is to say that now that social media has dominated almost every aspect of our lives, the educational field cannot be considered an exception. Also, social media has created new avenues for students to find answers to their assignments. This is why it is not surprising to see EFL students trying to find the fastest way to complete tasks, no matter the credibility of the materials or the esteem given to the contributions of others. As a consequence of this, digital plagiarism has grown to be a serious problem for EFL students at Moroccan universities.

Since there is an abundance of knowledge available on social media and students easily discover answers to questions pertaining to assignments and exams, I think it is very difficult to prevent EFL students from plagiarizing. Social media in particular and technology in general will therefore continue to be the hiding places for EFL students who intend to steal information and cheat. In this respect, Harding et al. (2004) stated that academic theft, in any form or manner, is always detrimental to student life. This means that academic dishonesty, which transgresses morals and ethics, will follow them into adulthood and society once they graduate. According to this principle, those who are used to cheating in college are more likely to do so in the workplace and other professional settings.

This study's generalizability is constrained by its small sample size, which concentrated on EFL students at three Moroccan universities (Dhar Mehraz University, Sais University, and Moulay Ismail University). As a result, the outcomes of the study are entirely dependent on the opinions, convictions,



and life experiences of EFL students. This constraint makes it challenging to fully investigate the hidden connection between social media use and digital plagiarism among EFL students in Moroccan universities. For this reason, further research is required to demonstrate a clear link between social media use and digital plagiarism, and future studies should consider additional departments and majors in order to have an accurate and thorough grasp of this issue.

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