

# Plagiarism and Copyright among LIS Professionals in Nigeria: An Assumption or A Reality?

**Ngozi Perpetua Osuchukwu and Obiora Kingsley Udem**

*Department of Library and Information Science  
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka  
ngostary2k@yahoo.com,  
[ok.udem@unizik.edu.ng](mailto:ok.udem@unizik.edu.ng)*

and

**Moses Nwosu**

*Akanu Ibiam Polytechnic Library,  
Unwana, Ebonyi State  
[holymoses1@yahoo.com](mailto:holy Moses1@yahoo.com)*

## Abstract

*Every day, papers are published from research by professionals in different journals, books, and websites for new knowledge. These are good practices for sharing knowledge. However, academic misconduct has been noticed, indicating plagiarism and infringement of copyright. This paper investigated the existence of plagiarism and copyright infringement among LIS professionals in Nigeria; the degree of involvement; causes; and punitive measures for the offenders. This is a survey research design that uses an online Google form for the collection of data. The online questionnaire was sent to different librarians' WhatsApp platforms. Findings showed that 98% of the respondents acknowledged the existence of plagiarism and copyright infringement. It was also discovered that poor searching skills, laziness, the pressure of publish-or-perish, and lack of punishment cause plagiarism and copyright infringement. The respondents strongly agreed that offenders could be demoted, prosecuted, and have their publication withdrawn and announced publicly.*

*The implication of the study is that intellectual property would be abused and disregarded if plagiarism and copyright infringement were not checked by LIS professionals. The study recommended more awareness, training, use of plagiarism checkers, and punishment enforcement to curb plagiarism and copyright infringement.*

**Keywords:** *Academic Integrity and Misconduct, Copyright Infringement, Plagiarism, Librarians, LIS Professionals, Nigeria.*

## Introduction

Every professional in the academic sector is a faculty member who reads, researches, and shares scholarly works for a more knowledgeable society. Educators, in particular, are committed to regular publications in order to avoid the hammer of academic promotion's "publish-or-perish syndrome." As plagiarism and copyright infringement are two-edged swords that check on the professionals' integrity, it is critical that astute conduct and ethics must be employed for academic production. Unarguably, plagiarism and infringement of copyright offend the sensibilities of the original owner of the intellectual property. The work a scholar puts his ideas, mind, body, heart, and soul to produce becomes a pawn in the hand of another person to copy with impunity. It is understandable that different aspects of scholarly works are carried out in academic institutions, organisations and agencies. These academic products, which include assignments, projects, conference papers, inaugural speeches, research work, book writing, and others, have accidentally or deliberately applied plagiarism and infringed on copyright (University of Illinois, 2021). This makes plagiarism and copyright become two sides of a coin that define the standard of intellectual property.

Plagiarism is the adoption of another's work without mentioning or acknowledging the source (Chen and Chou, 2017; Francis, 2015). It shows the denial of accrediting a source in one's work. Gaur (2019) succinctly puts it that plagiarism is an offence against an author, while copyright violation is an offence against a copyright holder. Arguably, they are common knowledge both through online and offline mechanisms. Therefore, any claim of ignorance of plagiarism and infringement of copyright is often not acceptable. However, the ability to demonstrate awareness of issues such as ethics, data protection, copyright, plagiarism, and other intellectual property has been instrumental in reducing cases of academic misconduct (Nwosu, Obiamalu, and Udem, 2015). To buttress this, IFLA takes a critical stand on academic standards and ethical considerations on plagiarism and has organised webinar series, conferences and training to reflect the importance of academic integrity.

It is significant to note that the world has witnessed several cases of plagiarism and copyright infringement among academia, government officials, politicians, and highly placed individuals. For example, ex-German Defense Minister Karl-Theodor zuGuttenburg resigned in 2011 after being accused of plagiarizing his doctoral thesis (Ruiperez and Garcia-Cabrero 2016). The public record of American Senator Edward Kennedy paying someone to take his Spanish exam in the 1960s was available (Singh and Remenyi, 2016), as was Melania Trump, the wife of former President Donald Trump, whose speech was a paraphrase of that of Michelle Obama, the previous First Lady (Werner and Colvin, 2016). Plagiarism is a colossal embarrassment to the government sector, the academic community, and professional organisations. Thus, librarians, being smart information managers, ought to render services and facilitate access to information on the importance of a high level of integrity and ethical standards in scholarly work.

Plagiarism can be divided into three types: (i) intentional plagiarism, in which falsification and fabrication of research data are used, (ii) unintentional or accidental plagiarism, in which there is a failure to document, most likely due to a lack of citation skills or careless paraphrasing, and (iii) self-plagiarism, in which an author copies his previous work as a new product without realizing that the act

infringes on a publisher's copyright (Ashare, 2021; Gaur, 2019). In Nigeria, LIS professionals are mentors to the students they nurture and the colleagues they assist. So, they have the mandate of best practices both in teaching in the classroom and in sharing their research outputs. This study investigated the existence of plagiarism and copyright infringement among librarians in Nigeria; the degree of involvement of professionals; causes; and punitive measures for the offenders.

### Statement of the Problem

LIS Professionals are highly respected and valued because of their expertise, research, and contributions to development. While they work towards researching for a better world and new knowledge, they are expected to maintain academic integrity. In other words, they are meant to produce original intellectual property without violating academic norms or infringing on another's copyright. However, it becomes uncomfortable when accusing fingers are pointed at the professionals with statements of unethical practices and academic misconduct in the bid to reach the peak. Indeed, so much has been discussed about plagiarism and copyright among the LIS professionals in Nigeria. With the new technology, the proliferation of academic misconduct and ethical issues in publication seems to go up as people copy direct quotations from existing work, even from fellow students, as well as paraphrase another's ideas without crediting the source. Plagiarism is also applied to digital content, video, audio, and artwork. Some institutions have set up platforms to check for plagiarism in students' projects and dissertations. Some publishers seem to use plagiarism software to review submitted articles for publication. There is a need to verify and state the dichotomy between the ethos of plagiarism and copyright for professionals in Nigeria. This study was focused on establishing the reality or assumption of plagiarism and copyright infringement among LIS professionals in Nigeria.

### Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

1. What is the level of involvement of LIS professionals in plagiarism and copyright infringement?

2. What are the causes of plagiarism and copyright infringement among LIS professionals in Nigeria?
3. What are the punitive measures that can control plagiarism and copyright infringement among LIS professionals in Nigeria?

### Literature Review

Publications and scholarly output must go on to add value to the world of knowledge. Based on this, plagiarism and copyright infringement need to be checked for personal, institutional, and national integrity. Plagiarism is using another's work without accrediting the source (University of Illinois, 2021; Nwagbara, 2019). In other words, it could be a deliberate falsehood or a cheat on the original owner. Northeastern University Academic Integrity Policy (2021) defined plagiarism as one's own words, ideas, data, code, or other original academic material of another without providing proper citation or attribution. Gaur (2019) called it research misconduct. In the words of Northeastern University Library (2022), plagiarism can apply to any assignment, either final or drafted copies, and it can occur either accidentally or deliberately. This indicates that not giving attribution to the source of the work or idea used is a violation of academic norms. It simply violates the author's rights. All these reflect cheating and unauthorised copying or presentation of already existing work as one's own work.

In copyright, when a published material is restricted and someone uses it without the necessary consent, it becomes an infringement. In throwing more light on the two concepts, Gaur (2019) stated that copyright is applicable to licensed content only, while plagiarism is applicable to both licensed and unlicensed content. What the licenses and unlicensed contents mean is that, apart from copying from a published work, copying from unpublished works like class assignments, seminar papers, term papers, and projects, among others, is an act of committing plagiarism. In another scenario, Arnold and Levin (2021) stated that copyright infringement occurs when a party takes an action that implicates one or more of the rights listed above without authorisation from the copyright owner or an applicable exception or limitation in the copyright law, such as fair use.

Plagiarism is also connected with inexperienced use of information sources, peer pressure, pressure to succeed, lack of skill, lack of resources, and standards (Anaman and Agyei, 2021; Ikenwe and Anaehobi, 2020; Liles, 2019; Aisyah and Sugihartati, 2019). However, writing skills and academic integrity are taught in a variety of educational institutions. Thus, educators can easily be referred to as having the responsibility of teaching the proper skills in academic writing and research. There is probably a gap in imparting this knowledge, as the various software for plagiarism checking would have easily picked up any academic misconduct. But the issue is how many institutions have plagiarism policies that fight against this anomaly (Ocholla and Ocholla, 2016). It becomes clear that professionals and academic institutions need authentic and exact intellectual property to work with in practising academic uprightness to decrease occurrences of plagiarism among professionals. To buttress this, Northeastern University Library (2022) stated that the following sources require citation:

- Word-for-word quotations from a source, including another student's work.
- Using paraphrase (expressing others' ideas in your own words).
- Unusual or controversial facts are not widely recognised.
- Audio, video, digital, or live exchanges of ideas, dialogue, or information.

Thus, it is considered good practice when credits are given to the original creators of a work. The fact that plagiarism offends the original author, the institution, and the profession makes it a worthwhile topic to be given adequate attention.

Studies have shown that professionals plagiarised and infringed on someone's copyright, even amidst global outcry. For instance, a researcher in the United States named Craig Grimes faced criminal fraud for accepting duplicative grants for one proposal, and he was banned for two years from receiving further funds for research (Reich, 2012). In India, at Delhi University, the ex-Vice Chancellor, Deepak Pental, was jailed for plagiarising a colleague's research (The Times of India, 2014). Radio Poland (2012) reported on a Polish professor who plagiarised a book under copyright's law, stating

that he could go to prison for three years. Even when these are reported and publicised, the misconduct keeps increasing, which questions the standard of teaching research writing and the ethics of the profession. A look at the medical field revealed that in 2016, Springer and BioMed Central retracted 58 articles published across their seven journals due to plagiarism. These were found out during peer review processes and allocation of authorship. In the same vein, BioMed Central found out about 28 articles and marked them for retraction while investigating over 40 more articles to be decided on. Springer also marked 30 articles for retraction, with 9 more articles under investigation (BioMed Central, 2022). These are highly respected scholars in their disciplines.

Furthermore, a group of Chinese researchers were caught trying to publish a plagiarised article in the *Journal of Korean Medical Science*. They were banned from submitting to the journal for five years (Shabe, 2018). Another was the withdrawal from the election in the US Senatorial election of John Walsh in 2014 when it was discovered that he had plagiarised his final paper during his master's degree at the United States Army War College (Shabe, 2018). In 2012, author and television personality Monica Crowley plagiarized her book without accrediting the original sources. The sale was stopped until the author revised the book with proper citations (Kaczynski, 2021). Another scenario was the resignation of Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg as defense minister after the disclosure that he plagiarised his doctorate thesis. The University of Bayreuth stripped Guttenberg of his doctorate (Guardian News and Media Limited, 2021). Seife (2012) reported that science writer and contributor to Radio Lab, Jonah Lehrer, was accused of recycling his old work and publishing it as new. One wonders why people are still plagiarising and copyrighting. Plagiarism and infringement of intellectual property rights affect all professions and industries.

The causes of plagiarism have been identified by researchers. Jereb, Perc, Lämmlein, Jerebic, Urh, Podbregar and Sprajc (2018) identified gender, socialisation, efficiency gain, motivation for study, methodological uncertainties, or easy access to electronic information via the Internet and new technologies, as reasons driving plagiarism. From

Gaur (2019), the causes of plagiarism include study pressure, disorganised research work, poor study habits, cut-and-paste culture, English as an international language in many non-English-speaking countries, lack of understanding of the seriousness of plagiarism, lack of strict academic discipline, careless attitude, and lack of referencing skills. Other causes include fear, recklessness, sheer laziness in research and poor writing skills (Okere, Adam and Sanusi, 2017). However, some reasons that push one to commit violations are not justifiable in stealing one's original intellectual property. There is another group that may be causing the issues of plagiarism and copyright infringement. This is the editor or the publisher. According to Woker (2015), the problem of plagiarism is not only of concern to those who conduct and publish research; it should also be of concern to editors. This is due to the fact that if editors and publishers do not check what is submitted to them before accepting publication, they are inadvertently causing academic misconduct.

Studies also show that scholars who commit academic misconduct are punished. One of the major consequences is damaging one's reputation and professional inclination, which is an aberration on integrity (Nwagbara, 2019; Shabe, 2018). Besides, defaulters have been known to face punitive measures like public denouncement, demotion to lower rank, dismissal, suspension, prosecution, withdrawal of publication, repeat of class for post-graduate students, among others (Gaur, 2018; Oriji, and Young, 2020). Purdue University (2022) stated that violators of copyright are punished through paying the actual dollar amount of damages and profits, which the law provides a range of from \$200 to \$150,000 for each work infringed; paying for all attorney's fees and court costs; issuing a court injunction to stop the infringing acts; impounding the legal work; and going to jail. Even with these consequences, many scholars and students still go ahead and plagiarise without impunity. Maybe the legal implications have been mere lip service, as research shows that only a few authors or writers sued other writers in court over the plagiarism act and copyright infringement (Francis, 2015).

As plagiarism and copyright infringement affect all sectors, the government makes policies that guard against intellectual property. In Ghana, plagiarism is being given serious attention with policies

in universities to guide the faculties, students, and staff (University of Ghana, 2019; Anaman and Agyei, 2021). In Nigeria, the aspects of plagiarism and copyright infringement are addressed with consequences for violators (Okere, Adam, and Sanusi, 2017). The involvement of the government in issues of plagiarism and infringement on copyright demonstrates the inclusive sectors' commitment to reducing wrongdoing in research. Apart from countries, professional organizations and academic institutions frown on scholarly misconduct as it affects authentic and accurate information sharing. The belief is that any published work must be an authoritative, complete, and original source for problem solving and contributing to knowledge (American Journal of Medical and Clinical Sciences, 2022).

Perhaps everybody should be responsible for expanding the avenues where plagiarism happens. It should be noted that lessons on avoiding plagiarism and copyright violations are provided in conferences and training sessions. There are also off-the-job training and conferences on citing rights and avoiding copyright infringement. The teachings reflect the use of internet searches, databases, building and formatting bibliographies, and sharing research (Ashare, 2021). Liles (2019) stated that librarians also offer their services to lecturers by having workshops to assist students on the importance of correctly documenting sources to avoid plagiarism. Other courses that are supposed to impart academic integrity include introduction to bibliography, information literacy, reference services, and so on. Based on this, LIS educators need to put emphasis on these courses and the training because, when the students learn, they will avoid the academic misconducts.

## Methodology

This is a survey research design. The population is comprised of LIS professionals that are members of the professional WhatsApp platforms. Librarians are used for this study because librarians are academic staff in the higher institutions of learning. Many of them are given courses to teach in the departments and even to guide post graduate students. Because they are teachers, project supervisors, mentors and authors, they have stake

in plagiarism and copyright. Many librarians have dual employment that make them teachers and librarians the same time. In addition, librarians are appraised and promoted like other academic staff which they are. They write papers, present and publish for professional development.

The Nigerian Library Association has different WhatsApp platforms that include Academic and Research Libraries (ARL), the National Association of Library and Information Science Educators (NALISE), and the State Chapters. A total enumerative sampling technique was used to select all the 130 LIS professionals who responded to the online survey. The instrument for data collection was an online Goggle form. The Google form was sent to NLA WhatsApp platforms while members were enjoined to fill in the form. This took place in August, 2021. The questionnaire was structured into two sections. Section A was made to collect biographical data of the respondents, while Section B collected data based on the research questions. The online questionnaire was sent to different librarians' WhatsApp platforms. The instruction was to click on the appropriate responses as they applied to the respondents. The questions were structured into "Yes" and "No" answers, as well four-point Likert scale options of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The online questionnaire was allowed to be on the online platform for two weeks with reminders. This was to enable every member of the group to participate. It was structured so that no one could fill out the form more than once. Thus, it gave the data collection credible responses from different participants. The data collected with the online Google form, which was saved in an excel spreadsheet, was imported into SPSS computer software. Values were given to the responses to each statement on the Likert scale: SA (4), A (3), D (2), and SD (1). The level of measurement was changed to scale (that is, interval scale) for the items in Tables 1 to 3, which was done under Variable view in SPSS. The frequency counts and percentages were used to analyse the data, while the mean scores and standard deviation were used to analyse the Likert data. A benchmark of 2.5 was used for decision making. It indicated that mean scores below 2.5 were rejected while mean scores above 2.5 were accepted. All analyses were computed using the SPSS computer software package.

## Results

### Demographic Data of the Respondents

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Majority of the respondents were female (53.1%), while the male respondents were 46.9%. The age range of the participants varied. Majority of the participants were between 41 and 50 years. Others were between 31 and 40 years (33.8%); 51-60 years (16.9%); 30 years and below (10%) and finally those above 60 years (2.4%). The

years of experience of the respondents within 6 -10 years of service (33.1%) rated highest in data collection. This was followed by 21.5% that represented respondents within 11-15 years of service, 18.5% for 5 years and below, while 13.8% and 13.1% represented 21 years and above and 16-20 years of service, respectively. Majority of the respondents were working in academic institutions (90.8%). Public library has 3.1%, information centres constitute 2.3%, research centers 1.5%, government and special libraries have 1% respectively.

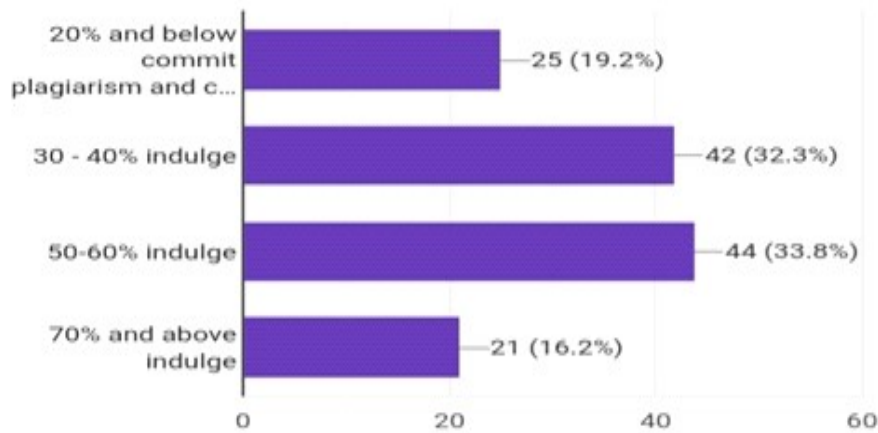
**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

S/N	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Gender		
	Female	69	53.1
	Male	61	46.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100.0</b>
2.	Age		
	30years and below	13	10.0
	31-40	44	33.8
	41-50	48	36.9
	51 – 60	22	16.9
	61 and above	3	2.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
3.	Educational Qualifications		
	BLIS/HND	24	18.5
	MLIS/MSc	64	49.2
	PhD	42	32.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
4.	Years of Experience		
	5 years and below	24	18.5
	6-10 years	43	33.1
	11-15years	28	21.5
	16-20years	17	13.1
	21 years and below	18	13.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
5.	Types of Institution		
	Academic institution	119	91.5
	Government Library	1	0.8
	Information Centers	3	2.3
	Public library	4	3.1
	Research Library	2	1.5
	Special Library	1	0.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Plagiarism and Copyright Infringement**

In order to determine the level of involvement of LIS professionals in plagiarism and copyright infringement, the respondents were first asked to indicate if they were aware that plagiarism and copyright infringement exist among LIS

professionals in Nigeria, the respondents rated in affirmative that plagiarism and copyright infringement exist among LIS professionals in Nigeria, an overwhelming proportion of the respondents 127 (97.7%) were in the affirmative. Though three of the respondents, 2.3% responded in negative.



**Figure 1: The level of involvement of LIS professionals in plagiarism and copyright infringement**

From Figure 1, the data shows that the respondents agreed that LIS professionals were involved in plagiarism and copyright infringement to the level

of 50%–60% (33.8%). Other responses indicated 30–40% (32.3%), 20% and below (19.2%), and 70% and above (16.2%).

**Table 2: Mean scores of the Respondents on the possible causes of plagiarism and copyright**

S/N	The possible causes of plagiarism and copyright	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Lack of literature searching skills	3.22	.780
2	Sheer laziness in research activities	3.51	.626
3	Poor knowledge of research methods	3.39	.675
4	Non-application of punishment to offenders	3.35	.692
5	Pressure from publish or perish syndrome	3.31	.746
6	Lack of self-respect, integrity and dignity	3.01	.812
7	Lack of plagiarism check by the Editors, Publishers and Institutions	3.41	.690

Table 2 covers statements on the possible causes of plagiarism and copyright. Librarian’s mean ratings which range from 3.01 to 3.51 as well as their corresponding standard deviations show that they agreed with all the possible causes of plagiarism and

copyright, as listed. However, non-application of punishment to offenders has the highest mean rating of 3.51 while lack of self-respect and integrity has the lowest mean rating of 3.01.

**Table 3: Mean scores of the Respondents on the punishment to the offenders of plagiarism and copyright infringement.**

S/N	To check plagiarism and copyright, offenders should be punished by	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Demotion to the lower rank	3.05	.740
2	Prosecution and payment for damages	3.20	.709
3	Announced publicly	3.02	.762
4	Withdrawal of publication	3.50	.650
5	Repeat the class in case of PG student	2.97	.835

Table 3 covers questions on the punishment for offenders of plagiarism and copyright infringement. The mean ratings of 2.97 and above, with their corresponding standard deviations, show that librarians agree with all the listed likely punishments. However, withdrawal of the publication has the highest mean rating of 3.05, while repeating the class in the case of a PG student has the lowest mean rating of 2.97.

## Discussion of Results

The big questions on the existence of plagiarism and copyright infringement show massive acknowledgment by the respondents. It corroborates with the studies that researchers, authors, faculties, students and staff commit plagiarism and copyright infringement (University of Ghana, 2019; Anaman and Agyei, 2021; Kaczynski, 2021; Shabe 2018). It is surprising and abysmal that those who should teach others are guilty of such misconduct. This shows the danger of more violations and the unending stoppage of plagiarism and copyright infringement.

Another disclosure on the level of involvement of LIS professionals in plagiarism and copyright infringement indicated up to 60%. This is in line with Onifade and Alex-Nmecha (2020) findings that revealed a high level of plagiarism and a moderate level of engagement in curbing the menace among LIS professionals in Nigeria. Similarly, The Times of India (2014) and Radio Poland (2012) worry that when librarians or professors who are looked up to are suspected of academic misconduct, their junior colleagues can easily follow suit. This implies that academic integrity is a big issue among professionals.

LIS professionals can be extremely helpful in addressing the issues of plagiarism and copyright infringement. LIS professionals are expected to play a significant role in a variety of capacities, including instructing other academics, researchers, and students in information literacy, internet searching, bibliographic practices, and information ethics. Despite the fact that academic institutions have relied on detective software to prevent plagiarism, this software has drawbacks. Olutola, cited in Onifade and Alex-Nmecha (2020), contends that there should be a shift away from complete reliance on plagiarism software toward assertive and persistent training on scholarly writing nested within various academic institutions' related curricula.

Furthermore, the possible causes of plagiarism and copyright infringement as rated by the respondents with high mean scores (Table 2) indicated high volumes of misconducts. The acceptance that lack of literature search skills, laziness, poor knowledge, pressure, lack of respect, and plagiarism contribute to the anomaly is an indication that more training is needed. These causes are also identified in the studies of Anaman and Agyei (2021), Ikenwe and Anaehobi (2020), Aisyah and Sugihartati (2019). It implies that the training must be regular and strategised to create the desired impact. That non-application of punishment was rated high corroborates with the study that the legal implications have been mere lip service without as few authors having really sued over the plagiarism act and copyright infringement (Francis, 2015). Probably, only positive firm actions will reduce the incidence of plagiarism and copyright infringement to a minimum.



So it becomes imperative that punitive measures must be applied to save the original sources, the profession, country and the academic institution as plagiarism and copyright infringement hurt streams of contenders. The current findings fit the submissions of Gaur (2018) and Oriji and Young (2020). Perhaps, the issue now is how to enforce these measures to the later. Without enforcement of the punitive measures, copying of someone's work can become a norm, Nigeria professionals may lose their integrity and research standards in the global field.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has shown that the issues of plagiarism and copyright infringement are relative and can cause grave harm to all players in the publishing and academic sectors. It is interesting to note that the studies carried out on academic dishonesty covers every faculty, government and communication sector. The studies also condemn the acts. Therefore, this study concludes that:

1. Plagiarism and copyright infringement exist among LIS professionals in Nigeria;
2. The level of the involvement of the professionals is notably high;
3. The causes include lack of searching skills, laziness in research, poor knowledge, pressure from publish or perish syndrome and lack of enforcement of punitive measures; and
4. To stop the anomaly, it may be necessary to punish the violators with a reduction in rank, legal action and payment of damages, public announcement, retraction of a publication, or repeating the course in the case of PG students. Based on the findings, the study recommended
  - Creation of awareness and provision of knowledge on the decadence of plagiarism and copyright infringement, especially to the career ready students.
  - Organisation and facilitation of trainings and conferences for capacity building on how to cite and write plagiarism free articles.
  - The re-strategisation and innovative ways of teaching the courses that relate to searching skills and research writing in library schools.

- Ensuring of punishment of the offenders and administration of plagiarism check by all institutions, journals and conference organizers.

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**Ngozi Perpetua Osuchukwu** is a lecturer in the Department of Library and Information Science, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria. She holds PhD in Library and Information Science.



**Obiora Kingsley Udem** is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Library and Information Science, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State. He holds a Bachelor of Education Degree (B.Ed) in Library and Information Science; a Master's Degree in Library and Information Science (MLIS), and a PhD from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.



**Moses Chikezie Nwosu** is a cataloguer, researcher and LIS educator at Federal Polytechnic, Uwana, Ebonyi State, Nigeria. He holds a PhD in Library and Information Science.

