Awareness about Plagiarism among the Student of Higher Educational Institutions: Reflections of a Case Study Conducted at Ibra College of Technology, Oman

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Author AOP designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Authors HHSAH and SZSAM managed the analyses of the study. Author AOP managed the literature searches. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Plagiarism has become a major problem in higher education institutions in recent years. With the advancement of modern means of publishing, the students and researchers can easily access information from various online sources, which has resulted in the act of stealing others works without referencing or without proper referencing, poor quotation, invented data, imitation, cheating and many other form of academic misconduct. Literature shows that many of the students in higher educational institutions are not very much aware about the process of research and writing. This misconception sometimes leads to plagarise academic work without knowing the seriousness of doing so. This is often due to a lack of awareness and research skills among students and researchers. This crime can lead to many problems such as, reduce the level of thinking, creativity

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and productivity because students do not prepare it by themselves and they do not work hard for it. The objective of this study is to investigate the student's attitude and awareness toward the issue of plagiarism. This study was conducted at Business Department in *University of Technology and Applied Science, (Ibra College of Technology) Sultanate of Oman* during the academic year 2019-20.

Keywords: Academic integrity; plagiarism; attitude.

1. INTRODUCTION

Higher educational institutions in Sultanate of Oman have recently started creating awareness of the problem of plagiarism in academia, similar to other higher educational institutes across the globe. Oman Ministry of Higher Education in association with Oman Accreditation Council have issued guidelines and recommendations on academic integrity and tackling of the issue of plagiarism in 2018 in order to train staff of public and private higher education institutions, the Oman Accreditation Council, and relevant Government Ministries. As a result, there is increased awareness among the students and staff about academic integrity and plagiarism. Assignments, reports and presentations are an integral part of assessment methods adopted across the Universities and higher education institutes in the country. However, the validity of this assessment method have been challenged by the serious problem of plagiarism. Researchers have found that copying another's work is very common among the students and many causes are attributed to this phenomenon. Lack of awareness about plagiarism is one of the major reason for this academic dishonesty. Many of the students are even not aware about the meaning of the word plagiarism. Thus, in this study, the researchers tries to examine the level of awareness about plagiarism among the college students in Sultanate of Oman. This study is conducted among the students of Ibra college of Technology (ICT), one of the seven colleges of technology in Oman under the Ministry of manpower.

1.1 Literature Review

Rahma Ibrahim Al Mahrooqi & R.S Alhinai [1] in their study 'Awareness of plagiarism: Omani English foundation students' and teachers' perspectives'; have tried to investigate the level of awareness among English students in a Foundation Program at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU). They also studied the ways and approaches that the teachers follow to deal with such plagiarism cases. They have taken a sample of 40 English Foundation students (20 males and 20 females) and 20 instructors (10 males and 10 females) from SQU. Their study reveals that student's awareness of plagiarism is very poor as even its meaning had not been explained at school classes. They suggest that providing proper awareness about plagiarism, practice on how to quote and cite something when prepare assignments are the ways to reduce the issue of plagiarism. (One sentence removed) Moreover, a negative relationship was found between students' academic proficiency and their willingness to plagiarize. The study suggest that students should be taught about plagiarism while they are at schools and they should be trained on how to cite, quote, and use references without plagiarizing.

Samia Naqvi [2] in his paper titled 'The rising tide of plagiarism and role of technology: Reflections of a case study conducted in the Sultanate of Oman examines the challenges that students facing in completing their academic works that force them to plagarise, the nature of plagiarism and the usefulness of plagiarism software like Turnitin in detecting and controlling and plagiarism. Questionnaires and interviews are used to gather the perspectives of undergraduate level Omani EFL students and their tutors on plagiarism with specific reference to the role of technology in promoting as well as checking it at a tertiary level institution in the Sultanate of Oman [3-5]. The study was conducted among the undergraduate level Omani EFL students and tutors specially emphasizing the role of technology in promoting as well as checking it at tertiary level institutions in the sultanate [6-9]. The study suggest that it is necessary to promote awareness about academic integrity among the students and the consequences of plagiarism through workshops and seminars. Students should be trained on referencing, summarizing and paraphrasing.

1.2 Aims and Objectives of the Study

1. To examine and explore the level of awareness among the students of Ibra College of Technology about the concept of plagiarism and academic integrity.
2. To study the motives of students that leads to plagiarism.
3. To study the level of understanding of the students about the plagiarism policy of the college.

1.3 Hypothesis of the study

Hypothesis 1:

There exists no significant difference in the awareness about plagiarism in the three departments considered.

Hypothesis 2:

There exists no significant difference in the awareness about plagiarism for the different level of students considered.

Hypothesis 3:

There exist a positive relation between the level of awareness of the students and the awareness programmes conducted by the college on plagiarism.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Both quantitative and qualitative techniques are applied in this research. Researchers have utilized both primary and secondary data. Students of Ibra College of Technology (ICT) constitutes the universe under this study. ICT consists of three departments; Engineering, IT and Business. Students studying in advance diploma and Bachelor level from three departments are the respondents under the study. Assessment methods such as presentations, assignments are mainly conducted in this level. Moreover, subjects such as senior projects, graduation projects etc. are studied mainly by the students belong to this level. Primary data for the study is collected from 60 students from the three departments of the college using a structured questionnaire. (20 students from Business Department, 25 students from Engineering and 15 students from IT department.). Convenience sampling method was used for data collection. Statistical tools such as mean, percentage, weighted average, Anova and correlation analysis etc. were utilized for analysis of the data.

2.1 Sampling Design

Table 1. Sampling design

Name of the department	Number of students	Percentage
Business	20	33.3
IT	15	25
Engineering	25	41.6
Total	60	100

2.1.1 Gender wise classification of respondents

Following table shows the gender wise classification of the respondents.

Table 2. Gender wise classification of respondents

Gender	Number of students	Percentage
Male	24	40
Female	36	60
Total	60	100

2.1.2 Academic level

Academic level of respondents in this study is given in the below table.

Table 3. Academic level

Academic level	Number of students	Percentage
Advance Diploma	25	41.7
Bachelor	35	58.3
Total	60	100

2.1.3 Reliability test

The reliability of the questionnaire is evaluated using Cronbach's alpha. Table 4 gives the initial Cronbach's alpha for each of the construct considered. Result shows that the constructs has reliability greater than 0.7 so we proceed for further analysis.

2.1.4 Analysis of the result

As already discussed, using a five-point Likert scale, the feedback to the questions in the questionnaire were collected from the targeted respondents during the field survey. The results analysis is divided in to three sections.

Section 1. Awareness about Plagiarism and the attitude of the respondents towards it.

In this section, the researchers try to understand the level of awareness of students about the issue of plagiarism and the attitude of students towards it.
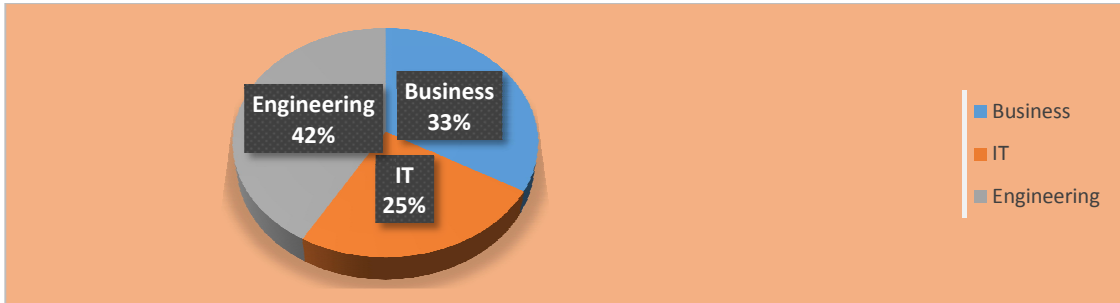

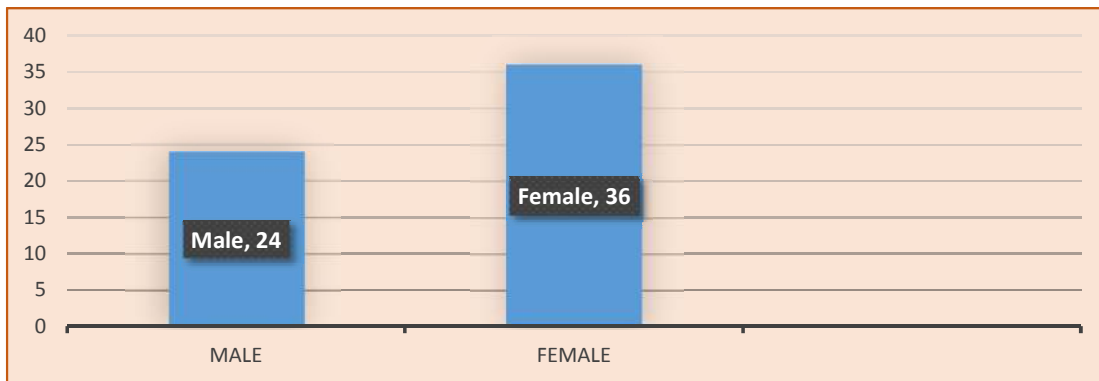**Fig. 1. Graphical representation of sampling design**

Fig. 2. Gender wise classification of respondents

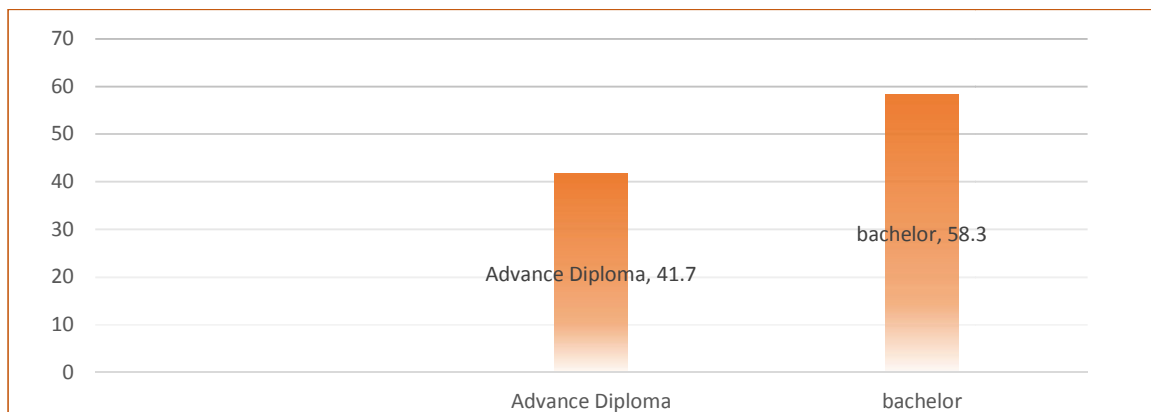**Fig. 3. Academic level**

Table 4. Reliability test

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Awareness about plagiarism	0.733	6
Awareness about College plagiarism policy	0.815	7
Motives behind plagiarism	0.933	9

Table 5. Awareness about Plagiarism and the attitude of the respondents towards it

Particulars (Feedback of the respondents regarding the awareness about plagiarism)	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Total
I have heard the term plagiarism before and I understand the meaning of plagiarism.	46.7	31.7	16.7	3.3	1.6	100
I know that Copying from a book or other sources without crediting the source constitutes plagiarism	38.3	46.7	15	0	0	100
I know that plagiarism is an academic crime.	45.0	33.3	14.5	5.0	2.2	100
I am aware that plagiarism is an academic dishonesty	40.5	41.7	12.7	2.7	2.4	100
I am aware about plagiarism checking software such as "Turnitin"	25	31.7	30	8.3	5.0	100

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- Analysis of the data clearly shows that more than 78% of the students in ICT are aware about the concept of plagiarism and they reveal that they know the meaning of this concept before.16.7percentage of the respondents are neutral in their opinion. Thus it is to be noted that majority of the respondents are aware about plagiarism.
- Regarding the perception of the students on plagiarism, it is clear that more than 85% of the respondents know that copying from a book or other sources without crediting the source constitutes plagiarism. Here also around 15% of the respondents remain neutral in their opinion.
- More than 50 % of the students are aware about plagiarism checking software such as 'Turnitin'.
- Among the respondents, around 79% of them are aware that plagiarism is an academic crime. This response shows that majority of the students are aware about the seriousness of plagiarism.
- More than 80% of the respondents agree that plagiarism is an act of academic dishonesty.

Section 2. Awareness of students about College Plagiarism Policy

In this section, researchers want to understand the level of awareness of students regarding plagiarism policy of the College. Ministry of higher Education in association with Oman Accreditation Council have issued guidelines and recommendations on academic integrity and tackling of the issue of plagiarism in 2008 in order to train staff of public and private higher education institutions, the Oman Accreditation Council, and relevant Government Ministries. Consequent to this, each college under the ministry has prepared plagiarism policy and have disseminated it among the staff and students. Various awareness programmes including workshops and seminars have been conducting throughout the colleges as part of making aware the students and staff about the academic integrity, the issue of plagiarism and the way of dealing such instances by implementing the plagiarism policy. In this section, the researchers want to investigate the level of awareness among the students about this policy.

Second part of the study tries to understand the awareness of the students about the plagiarism policy of the college.

- The analysis shows that out of 60 respondents, around 79% of them are aware about the plagiarism policy of the institution.
- Around 81% of the respondents are aware about the seriousness and further consequences of the plagiarism and they know the way the college administration will treat the issue of plagiarism.
- 75% of the respondents got information regarding plagiarism from the teachers. In the beginning of each semester, while detailing the course delivery plan, teachers normally explain the importance of

academic integrity and hence majority of the students are aware about it.

- Around 70% of them have gone through the articles in the college Bylaw regarding plagiarism and aware about the consequences of academic dishonesty in ICT.
- 50% of the students have attended the workshops organized by the college/departments on plagiarism and academic integrity.
- Each department conducts induction programs for students in the beginning of each semester and the study reveals that 60% of the respondents are getting the awareness about the plagiarism policy of the college through these programmes.

Section 3. Motives behind Plagiarism

Students plagiarize their academic works for many reasons. The third objective of the study was to identify the motives behind plagiarism. Following are the result of the responses of the respondents in this regard.

- 60% of the respondents have the opinion that their poor language skill is the main reason that encourage them to plagarise their academic works. However, another 23%of them disagree with this statement.

- It is a fact that preparation of projects reports and assignments require good writing skills. Among the language skills, poor writing skill is the motive for around 54% of the students to plagarise their academic works.
- 62%of the respondents have of the opinion that they have shortage of time for completing their assignments and other academic submission, which induce them to plagiaries their academic submission.
- Around 50% of the respondents agree that their laziness is a reason for plagiarism. Due to laziness, some students usually try to complete their academic submission at the end of the semester. At the end of the semester, they find it difficult to complete their assignments in various subject together. So many of them resort to simply copy materials from internet.
- Lack of interest in studies is the reason for 30% of the students to plagiaries their academic submission.
- Around 30% of the respondents have the opinion that the assignment given to they are difficult which they cannot do it by themselves. Hence, they utilize online resources and plagiaries materials from internet.

Table 6. Feedback of the respondents regarding the awareness about college plagiarism policy

Particulars (Feedback of the respondents regarding the awareness about College plagiarism policy)	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Total
I know that ICT has a strict policy on plagiarism	48.3	30.0	13.0	6.7	2.0	100
I Know that if a student violates the plagiarism policy he/she has to face disciplinary actions.	30	51.7	8.8	5.4	4.1	100
I understand that ICT gives great importance for academic Integrity	35	40	18.3	5.0	1.7	100
I have read the related articles in the college Bylaw regarding plagiarism and Iam aware about the consequences of academic dishonesty in ICT.	23.3	46.7	16.7	11.7	1.6	100
My teachers usually explain about plagiarism and its consequences in the class in the beginning of each semester.	40	35	18	3.3	3.7	100
I have attended workshops on plagiarism	28.3	23.3	26.0	10.8	11.6	100
I have information about plagiarism during the induction programme conducted in the department.	21.7	40.0	20.3	15.3	2.7	100

Table 7. Feedback of the respondents regarding the motives behind plagiarism

Particulars (Feedback of the respondents regarding the motives behind plagiarism)	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Total
Poor language skills induce me to copy my reports from internet	17	45	16.5	14.9	6.6	100
My writing skills are poor which induce me to plagiaries my academic works	16.7	36.7	23.3	15	8.3	100
Lack of time is the reason why I copy my reports and presentations from internet.	26.7	35	13.3	20.0	5.0	100
I am lazy to work hard and hence I copy everything from internet	16.7	31.7	18.3	21.7	11.6	100
Lack of interest in studies induce me to plagiarism my academic works	18.3	31.7	20	20	10	100
I think that the assignment is too difficult and hence I plagiaries my academic work.	17.5	32.5	21.7	23.3	5.0	100
I believe plagiarism to be worthwhile because it results in better grades.	25	26.7	20	20	8.3	10

3.1 Testing of Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1

First, we considered the departments to know whether there exist any difference among the students in different department regarding the awareness about plagiarism. Since there are three departments, we used Tukey analysis to test this hypothesis. The result is given Table 8.

The result reveals that there exist no significant differences among the students belong to different department regarding the awareness about plagiarism, as the value of significance between and among the department is more than 0.05. Hence $H_0 1$ is accepted.

Hypothesis 2

Secondly, we considered the academic level of students and tested the hypothesis. Academic level consists two groups; (a) Advance Diploma and (b) Bachelor. So an independent sample T test is used here to compare the different department and the result is exhibited in Table 9.

Table 9 shows the result of independent sample test. The result shows there is a significant difference between the two groups, which are advance diploma, and bachelor as the significance value shows less than 0.05, in two awareness parameters considered. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between Advance Diploma and Bachelor regarding the awareness about plagiarism. Therefore, $H_0 2$ is rejected.

Hypothesis 3

Thirdly, the researchers tried to study whether there exist any relationship between the level of awareness of the students and the awareness programmes conducted by the college on plagiarism.

Correlation analysis is used to find out the relationship between the variables. The result is exhibited in Table 10.

Table 10 shows the relationship between the variables regarding awareness about plagiarism and awareness programme conducted by the college. The result shows that there is a significant correlation between AWP1 and ACPP6 as the value of significance shows 0.026 and the Pearson correlation is 0.288.Also AWP3 have relationship with ACPP5 and ACPP7 as the values of significance are .042 and .032 respectively with Pearson value .263 and .278.There for , it can be concluded that various awareness programmed organized by the college administration have played an important role in disseminating the awareness about plagiarism and college plagiarism policy among the students. Hence, $H_a 3$ is accepted.

Table 8. Multiple comparison test

Multiple comparisons

Tukey HSD

Dependent Variable	(I) Department	(J) Department	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
I have heard the term plagiarism and I am aware about the meaning of plagiarism	Business	I T	.32759	.34888	.618	-.5120	1.1671
		Engineering	-.12479	.27260	.891	-.7808	.5312
	I T	Business	-.32759	.34888	.618	-1.1671	.5120
		Engineering	-.45238	.36553	.436	-1.3320	.4272
	Engineering	Business	.12479	.27260	.891	-.5312	.7808
		I T	.45238	.36553	.436	-.4272	1.3320
I know that copying something without crediting the sources is plagiarism	Business	I T	.02069	.24853	.996	-.5774	.6188
		Engineering	-.42693	.19419	.080	-.8942	.0404
	I T	Business	-.02069	.24853	.996	-.6188	.5774
		Engineering	-.44762	.26039	.207	-1.0742	.1790
	Engineering	Business	.42693	.19419	.080	-.0404	.8942
		I T	.44762	.26039	.207	-.1790	1.0742
I am aware about the plagiarism checking software such as 'Turn it in'.	Business	I T	-.11724	.40479	.955	-1.0913	.8569
		Engineering	.38752	.31628	.443	-.3736	1.1486
	I T	Business	.11724	.40479	.955	-.8569	1.0913
		Engineering	.50476	.42410	.464	-.5158	1.5253
	Engineering	Business	-.38752	.31628	.443	-1.1486	.3736
		I T	-.50476	.42410	.464	-1.5253	.5158

Table 9. Independent sample T test

Independent Samples Test		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for equality of means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. error difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
									Lower	Upper
I know that copying something without crediting the sources is plagiarism	Equal variances assumed	.643	.426	2.203	58	.032	.38487	.17467	.03523	.73451
	Equal variances not assumed			2.180	50.825	.034	.38487	.17652	.03046	.73929
Iam aware about the plagiarism checking software such as 'Turn it in'.	Equal variances assumed	.104	.749	2.185	58	.033	.48832	.22350	.04094	.93571
	Equal variances not assumed			2.175	55.757	.034	.48832	.22451	.03852	.93812

Table 10. Correlation analysis

		Correlations					
		AWP1	AWP2	AWP3	ACPP5	ACPP6	ACPP7
AWP1	Pearson Correlation	1	.267*	.220	.077	.288*	.176
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.039	.091	.557	.026	.178
	N	60	60	60	60	60	60
AWP2	Pearson Correlation	.267*	1	.474**	.176	-.055	.051
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.039		.000	.179	.679	.698
	N	60	60	60	60	60	60
AWP3	Pearson Correlation	.220	.474**	1	.263*	.107	.278*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.091	.000		.042	.417	.032
	N	60	60	60	60	60	60
ACPP5	Pearson Correlation	.077	.176	.263*	1	.330*	.369**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.557	.179	.042		.010	.004
	N	60	60	60	60	60	60
ACPP6	Pearson Correlation	.288*	-.055	.107	.330*	1	.486**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.026	.679	.417	.010		.000
	N	60	60	60	60	60	60
ACPP7	Pearson Correlation	.176	.051	.278*	.369**	.486**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.178	.698	.032	.004	.000	
	N	60	60	60	60	60	60

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); AWP1, AWP2 and AWP3-- Awareness about plagiarism variable 1, 2 and 3; ACPP5, ACPP6 and ACPP7— Awareness about college plagiarism policy variable 5, 6 and 7*

4. SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

Plagiarism is one of the most serious and common issues in the academic field worldwide. Increasing instances of plagiarism and academic dishonesty have compelled most of the higher educational institutions and universities to follow stringent policies towards it to reduce the practice. Present study on plagiarism reveals that this practice is highly prevalent among the students in Oma. At the same time, higher educational institutions in the country have formulated strict policies on plagiarism and all efforts have been made to disseminate the same among the teachers and student community. As a result, most of the students studying in colleges and universities are aware about the issue of plagiarism and its consequences. Still, this practice cannot be stopped in its full sense as the students do the same because of various motives including their poor language skills. Inadequate knowledge about proper citation and quotation is the important cause of plagiarism in many cases. It has also noticed that a substantial amount of plagiarism occurs among the students who produced relatively poor quality work. Hence, it is suggested that an effective way to reduce unintentional plagiarism is to teach and train the students how to properly site and quote while they prepare their assignments.

The study also shows that around 50% of the students are not aware about plagiarism checking soft wares such as Turnitin. Creating awareness among the students about such softwares through training programmes is suggested in this regard. Poor language skills specially writing skills and the shortage of time for completing their assignments and other academic submission are the major motives for most of the students to plagiaries their academic submission. There is a significant and positive relation between time planning, time management and academic performance of the students. Hence, time management practices should be encouraged among them so that they can utilize the time effectively and purposefully. Training programmes for improving writing and comprehension skills are also suggested to help the students improve their academic submissions and assignments.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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