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## Thu Dau Mot University students' perceptions of plagiarism

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### ABSTRACT

*Plagiarism is a very common problem in many universities. A lot of students plagiarize unconsciously because they don't understand the concept. The study will clarify the concept of plagiarism, as well as ways for universities to help their students avoid the habit of plagiarism. The aim of this study is to explore Thu Dau Mot University Students' Knowledge about the seriousness of Plagiarism; Find out the most common types of plagiarism committed by students; Analyzing and finding out the possible common reason a student unintentional plagiarism. In terms of purposes of the study, to answer the research question and based on the background of previous studies, in this study, one hundred students in different majors - freshmen to seniors (freshmen, suphomores, juniors and seniors). The result of this study shows that the majority of students are aware of plagiarism and the consequences of plagiarism, plagiarism in Thu Dau Mot University is quite common. The study indicates that plagiarism does exist at Thu Dau Mot University and students are willing to take the risk of plagiarizing, regardless of knowing that it is unacceptable. It also confirms that plagiarism is common amongst students across all departments at Thu Dau Mot University, Binh Duong Province, Vietnam.*

**Keywords:** *plagiarism, perception, students*

### 1. Introduction

In academia, plagiarism is considered an act of dishonesty and a very serious ethical violation. Authors found to be plagiarized can suffer huge consequences in relation to their research work and their position in the profession. However, sometimes researchers unintentionally or intentionally still encounter plagiarism errors in their research work.

In Vietnam, the phenomenon of plagiarism is an academic problem. What percentage of undergraduate and graduate students in Vietnamese institutions know how to write an essay that meets academic ethics standards? What percentage of them know how to cite correctly in a thesis, graduation thesis? Many lecturers said that the percentage is extremely low (Thao Nguyen, 2018). Many students are still very unfamiliar with the concept of "plagiarism" and only stops at the rudimentary understanding of this issue. The most common habit of students when making theses and graduation thesis is to find the products of previous students with the same topic for "reference". If "reference" in the direction of inheritance and development of the topic, it is not worth mentioning. But many students use these materials as a source of "copy" for their writing. They copy-and-paste a sentence written by someone else into their paper without full citation. That's only at the graduate level. We counted at the university level, with large assignments, projects, and essays, this phenomenon is... "terrible" (Thao Nguyen, 2018).

According to the Vietnam Youth Newspaper, the percentage of university students who "plagiarize" in some Vietnamese universities accounts for a high rate of the world. Many master students also have their master's theses and scientific articles rejected because of plagiarism behavior. Many universities have conducted surveys on students' perceptions of plagiarism and research ethics as follows (Minh Giang, 2015): Duy Tan University - provided survey data on students when they first entered this school with the question: "Have you ever copied the original author's article online, reference books, textbooks...without citation?". Accordingly, only 16% answered no, 84% of students say they copied like that. Specific percentage are as follows: 13.5% say that they copied and repeated it many times, 12% often did it, 49% did it and 9.5% rarely did it. Regarding the reason for not writing citations when copying contents from other authors' articles, 36% say that they did not know the citation method, 12% did not remember who the author was, 21% say because of pressure for progress, 9% did not care about citation.

Thu Dau Mot University annually encourages scientific research activities of students and lecturers, and Thu Dau Mot University has specific regulations in scientific research activities. However, the problem of plagiarism among university students today is very alarming. Especially, some most noticeable problems are presentations, essays, ..., the situation of "copy-paste" is still happening a lot. Nowadays, due to the information technology development, plagiarism is more likely to happen. The consequences of plagiarism extend far beyond the individual student who has got caught cheating in their essay and/or report submission. There are many students who do not know what plagiarism is, and there are also many students who know clearly the types of plagiarism but still deliberately plagiarize. Up to now, Thu Dau Mot university has not conducted any surveys on students' perceptions of plagiarism.

Based on the above situation, we conducted a study to survey TDMU students' perceptions of plagiarism, to find out the perception of students of Thu Dau Mot

University on the issue of plagiarism, to explore the causes of plagiarism among students at Thu Dau Mot University, thereby proposing a solution to reduce plagiarism among students and raise awareness of plagiarism in research for students at Thu Dau Mot University.

## **2. Literature review**

Studies related to student plagiarism have been popularly published in recent years. In the world, there are studies of Guangwei Hu and Jun Lei (2011), which reported on a mixed-methods study of Chinese university students' knowledge of and attitudes toward plagiarism in English academic writing. And Muhammad Ramzan, Muhammad Asif Munir, Nadeem Siddique, Muhammad Asif (2012) in the research on Awareness about plagiarism amongst university students in Pakistan highlighted the seriousness of plagiarism amongst graduate and post-graduate students of Pakistan. Findings revealed that there was a low level of awareness about plagiarism and university plagiarism policies and processes amongst the students. Muhammad Ramzan, Muhammad Asif Munir, Nadeem Siddique, Muhammad Asif (2012) in the research on Awareness about plagiarism amongst university students in Pakistan highlighted the seriousness of plagiarism amongst graduate and post graduate students of Pakistan. It also explored the university students' level of awareness of plagiarism. Findings revealed that there was a low level of awareness about plagiarism and university plagiarism policies and processes amongst the students.

In Vietnam, there are studies of Phan Thị Diễm Hương, Nguyễn Thị Minh Nghĩa (2017) exploring the issue of awareness of plagiarism among students and young lecturers at School of Hospitality and Tourism – Hue University. And Nguyễn Thái Ngọc Hà (2018) with a recent survey of 303 students in the faculty of pedagogy, An Giang University, shows that most students only know some basic requirements about the copyright in scientific research, they feel confusing and don't know how to apply the knowledge about copyright into their studies.

Thu Dau Mot University annually encourages scientific research activities of students and lecturers; Thu Dau Mot University has specific regulations in scientific research activities. However, the phenomenon of plagiarism among university students today is really alarming. When making presentations or subject essays, students copy-paste the contents what they have found on free websites. However, no research related to the plagiarism status of students has been currently conducted at Thu Dau Mot University.

In this study, we have identified 3 issues for further research such as the awareness of the seriousness of plagiarism, the reason why students unintentionally commit plagiarism, and feasible and effective solutions for limiting students' plagiarism in their assignments. This study seeks to address these issues by answering the following questions about plagiarism:

To what extent do Thu Dau Mot University Students understand the seriousness of Plagiarism?

What possible common reasons make a student unintentionally commit plagiarism?

What potential solutions help students to avoid plagiarism at Thu Dau Mot University?

### **3. Methodology**

Among many other research methods, Ben Davis (2021) reported that Education research often relies on a quantitative methodology. Quantitative research in education provides numerical data that can prove or disprove a theory, and administrators can easily share the number-based results with other schools and districts.

In addition, the study of Oberiri Destiny Apuke (2017) established that “quantitative research deals with quantifying and analyzing variables in order to get results. It involves the utilization and analysis of numerical data using specific statistical techniques to answer questions like who, how much, what, where, when, how many, and how. It also describes the methods of explaining an issue or phenomenon through gathering data in numerical form.”

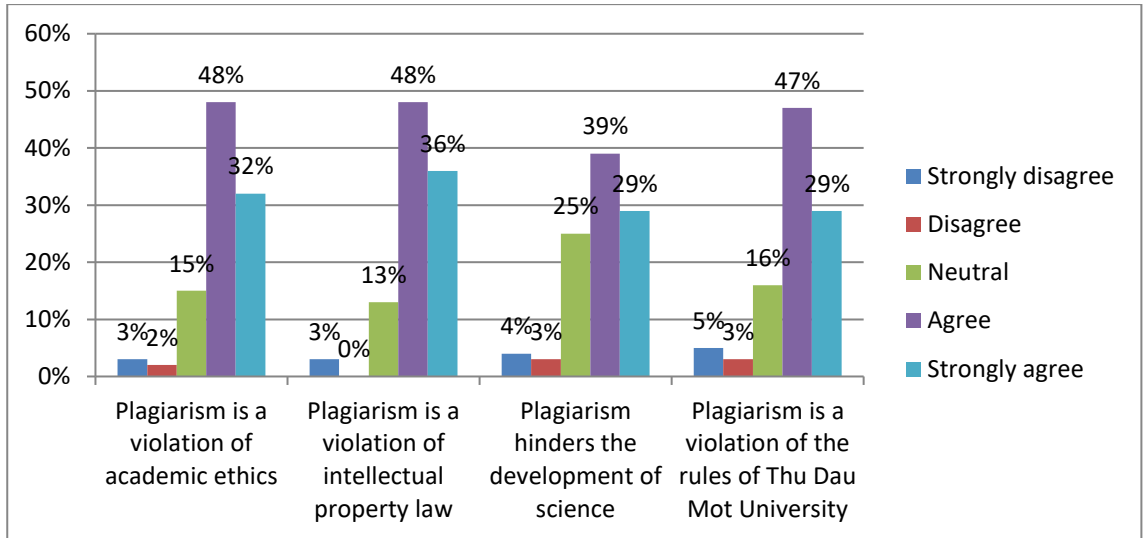
In this study, the writers used the quantitative methods. After the literature review on Plagiarism was conducted, we designed a questionnaire to investigate Thu Dau Mot University Students’ perceptions of Plagiarism. Then, the data were collected through google form surveys, from sending out email and link surveys randomly to formal students in different majors - freshmen to senior students at Thu Dau Mot University.

### **4. Results**

We conducted the online survey with 100 participants. All of the collected data will be presented and analyzed in this chapter. We designed one questionnaire in the study. The questionnaire includes two sections: general information, knowledge of plagiarism rated by freshmen to senior students. A percentage analysis is performed to know the results of the 23 items of the 3 questions. A percentage frequency distribution is a display of data that specifies the percentage of observations that exist for each data point or grouping of data points. In this research, percentage frequency distributions are displayed as tables or as bar graphs or pie charts. Besides, the respondents, who are neutral with survey variables, enable them not to have an opinion. Neutral denotes a state of confirming their positions, but potentially means a substantial proportion who favor or oppose a survey variable aren't counted.

#### ***Question 1: Your opinions about the seriousness of Plagiarism***

This section discusses Students Knowledge about the seriousness of Plagiarism, the following table show the results:



**Figure 1.** Students’ opinions about the seriousness of Plagiarism

The above statistical results show that a majority of the respondents say they have *strongly agreed* with Plagiarism is a violation of academic ethics (32%), Plagiarism is a violation of intellectual property law (36%), Plagiarism hinders the development of science (29%), Plagiarism is a violation of the rules of Thu Dau Mot University (29%). A majority of the students also report that they *Agreed* with these ideas (48%, 48%, 39% and 47%, respectively). The majority of respondents say they are *Neutral* with the items (13% to 25%). Few to none reports *Strongly disagree* or *Disagree* (0.0% to 5%).

In the content about “Plagiarism is a violation of academic ethics” to explore Students’ Knowledge about Plagiarism is cheating, a serious form of academic ethics, the ethics of plagiarism is merely the ethics of stealing. We can easily see that a majority of the respondents said they *strongly agreed* with *Plagiarism is a violation of academic ethics* (32%), there are 48 students (48%) who rate “*Agreed*” levels, 15 students (15%) who rate “*Neutral*” levels, a few report “*Strongly disagree*” (2%) or *Disagree* (3%).

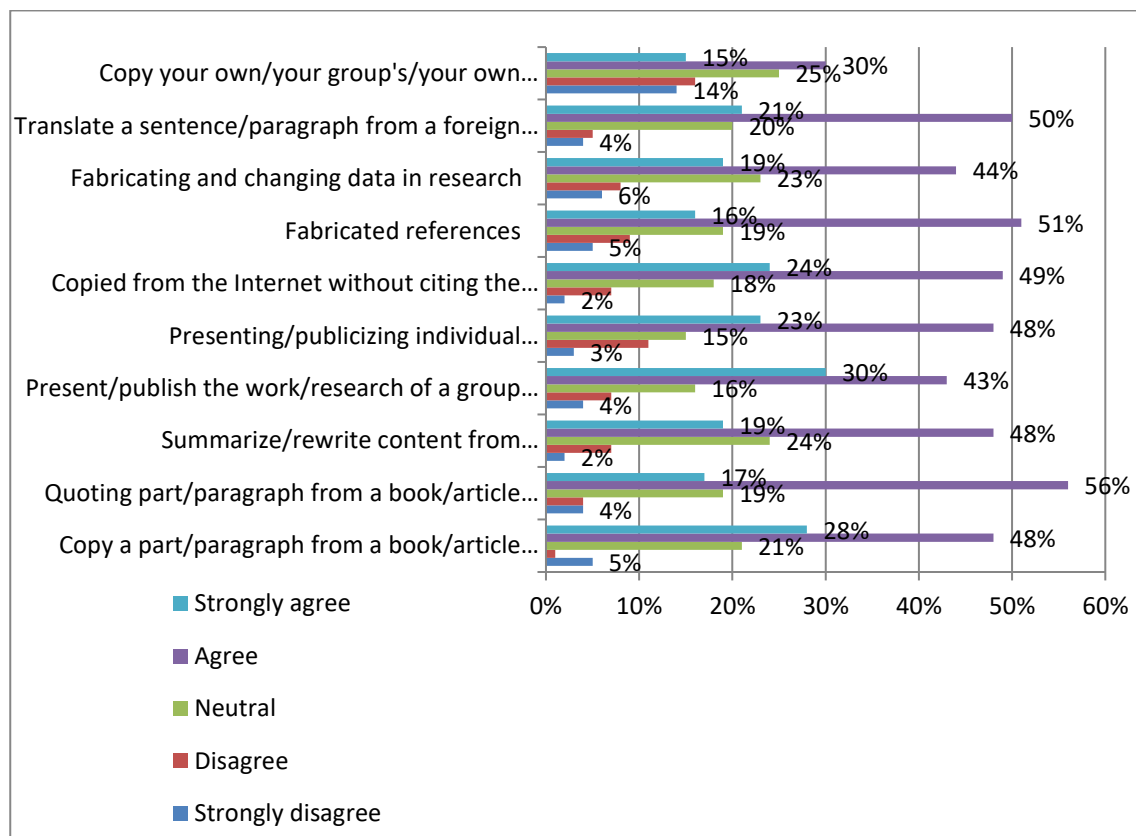
In the content about “*Plagiarism is a violation of intellectual property law*” to explore Students’ Knowledge about intellectual property law, plagiarism is a serious form of Copyright violations. The above statistical results clearly show that a majority of the respondents say they *strongly agreed* with Plagiarism is a violation of intellectual property law (36%), there are 48 students (48%) who rate “*Agreed*” levels, 3% are not aware of the item and 13% were not sure.

In the item about “*Plagiarism hinders the development of science*” to explore Students’ Knowledge about plagiarism, a serious kind of academic dishonesty punishable by the university. We can easily see that a majority of the respondents said they had *strongly agreed* with *Plagiarism hinders the development of science* (39%), there are 29 students (29%) who rate “*Agreed*” levels, 25 students (25%) who rate “*Neutral*” levels, a few report “*Strongly disagree*” (4%) or *Disagree* (3%).

Thu Dau Mot University has a specific document on research ethics, which is noticed by all lecturers and students. The item “*Plagiarism is a violation of the rules of Thu Dau Mot University*” discuss how many students know that plagiarism is cheating, a serious kind of academic dishonesty punishable by Thu Dau Mot University. Respondents are asked if they are aware of plagiarism policy at Thu Dau Mot University. Figure 1 illustrates that 29% *strongly agreed* with *Plagiarism is a violation of the rules of Thu Dau Mot University*, there are 47 students (47%) who rate “*Agreed*” levels, 16 students (16%) who rate “*Neutral*” levels, a few reports “*Strongly disagree*” (5%) or *Disagree* (3%).

**Question 2: Your opinions about the most common types of plagiarism**

To find out what types of plagiarism were related to the participants’ ability to recognize types of plagiarism, the study also investigated Students Knowledge of the most common types of plagiarism. The following Figures show the results for question 2: Your opinions about the most common types of plagiarism:



**Figure 2.** Students’ opinions about the most common types of plagiarism

In the item about “Copy a part/paragraph from a book/article verbatim without citing the source”, we can easily see that the majority of the 100 participants report they *strongly agreed* with *Copy a part/paragraph from a book/article verbatim without citing the source* (25%), there are 48 students (48%) who rate “*Agreed*” levels, 21 students (21%) who rate “*Neutral*” levels, a few reports “*Strongly disagree*” (5%) or *Disagree* (1%).

In the item about “*Quoting part/paragraph from a book/article verbatim without using quotation marks*”, we can easily see that a majority of the respondents say they *strongly agreed* with *Quoting part/paragraph from a book/article verbatim without using quotation marks* (17%), there are 56 students (56%) who rate “*Agreed*” levels, 19 students (19%) who rate “*Neutral*” levels, a few reports “*Strongly disagree*” (4%) or *Disagree* (4%).

In the item about “*Summarize/rewrite content from books/articles without citing the source*”, we can easily see that a majority of the respondents say they *strongly agreed* with *Summarize/rewrite content from books/articles without citing the source* (19%), there are 48 students (48%) who rate “*Agreed*” levels, 24 students (24%) who rate “*Neutral*” levels, a few reports “*Strongly disagree*” (2%) or *Disagree* (7%).

In the item about “*Present/publish the work/research of a group in the name of an individual*”, we can easily see that a majority of the respondents say they *strongly agreed* with *Present/publish the work/research of a group in the name of an individual* (30%), there are 43 students (43%) who rate “*Agreed*” levels, 19 students (16%) who rate “*Neutral*” levels, a few reports “*Strongly disagree*” (4%) or *Disagree* (7%).

In the item about “*Presenting/publicizing individual work/research results in the name of a group*”, we can easily see that a majority of the respondents say they *strongly agreed* with *Presenting/publicizing individual work/research results in the name of a group* (23%), there are 48 students (48%) who rate “*Agreed*” levels, 15 students (15%) who rate “*Neutral*” levels, a few reports “*Strongly disagree*” (3%) or *Disagree* (11%).

In the item about “*Copied from the Internet without citing the source*”, we can easily see that a majority of the respondents say they *strongly agreed* with *Copied from the Internet without citing the source* (24%), there are 49 students (49%) who rate “*Agreed*” levels, 18 students (18%) who rate “*Neutral*” levels, a few reports “*Strongly disagree*” (2%) or *Disagree* (7%).

In the item about “*Fabricated references*”, we can easily see that a majority of the respondents say they *strongly agreed* with *Fabricated references* (16%), there are 51 students (51%) who rate “*Agreed*” levels, 19 students (19%) who rate “*Neutral*” levels, a few reports “*Strongly disagree*” (5%) or *Disagree* (9%).

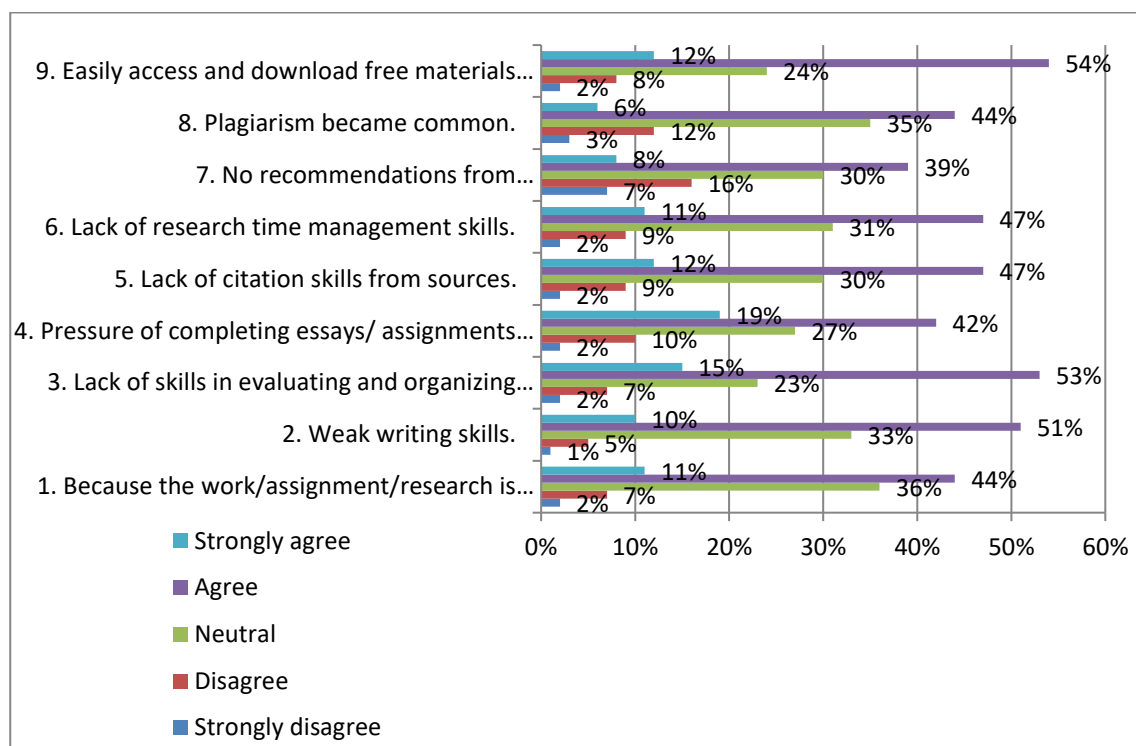
In the item about “*Fabricating and changing data in research*”, we can easily see that a majority of the respondents say they *strongly agreed* with *Fabricating and changing data in research* (19%), there are 44 students (44%) who rate “*Agreed*” levels, 23 students (23%) who rate “*Neutral*” levels, a few reports “*Strongly disagree*” (6%) or *Disagree* (8%).

In the item about “*Translate a sentence/paragraph from a foreign language into Vietnamese without citing the source*”, we can easily see that a majority of the respondents say they *strongly agreed* with *Translate a sentence/paragraph from a foreign language into Vietnamese without citing the source* (21%), there are 50 students (50%) who rate “*Agreed*” levels, 20 students (20%) who rate “*Neutral*” levels, a few reports “*Strongly disagree*” (4%) or *Disagree* (5%).

In the item about “*Copy your own/your group’s/your own published assignment/dissertation/article*”, we can easily see that a majority of the respondents say they *strongly agreed* with *Copy your own/your group’s/your own published assignment/dissertation/article* (15%), there are 30 students (30%) who rate “*Agreed*” levels, 25 students (25%) who rate “*Neutral*” levels, a few reports “*Strongly disagree*” (14%) or *Disagree* (16%).

**Question 3: The possible common reason a student unintentionally commit plagiarism**

This section aims to discuss the common reasons that make a student unintentionally commit plagiarism. Figure 16 shows responses based on items that students fall under on why they plagiarize.



**Figure 3.** Students’ opinions about the common reasons make a student unintentionally commit plagiarism

In the item to explore responses based on *Because the work/assignment/research is too difficult* that students fall under on why they plagiarize, we can easily see that a majority of the respondents say they *strongly agreed* with *Because the work/assignment/research is too difficult for you* (11%), there are 44 students (44%) who rate “*Agreed*” levels, 36 students (36%) who rate “*Neutral*” levels, a few reports “*Strongly disagree*” (2%) or *Disagree* (7%).

In the item about “*Weak writing skills*”, we can easily see that a majority of the respondents say they *strongly agreed* with *Weak writing skills* (10%), there are 51 students (51%) who rate “*Agreed*” levels, 33 students (33%) who rate “*Neutral*” levels, a few reports “*Strongly disagree*” (1%) or *Disagree* (5%).



In the item about “*Lack of skills in evaluating and organizing research resources*”, we can easily see that a majority of the respondents say they *strongly agreed* with *Lack of skills in evaluating and organizing research resources* (15%), there are 53 students (53%) who rate “*Agreed*” levels, 23 students (23%) who rate “*Neutral*” levels, a few reports “*Strongly disagree*” (2%) or *Disagree* (7%).

In the item about “*Pressure of completing essays/ assignments at the end of the course*”, we can easily see that a majority of the respondents say they *strongly agreed* with *Pressure of completing essays/ assignments at the end of the course* (19%), there are 42 students (42%) who rate “*Agreed*” levels, 27 students (27%) who rate “*Neutral*” levels, a few reports “*Strongly disagree*” (2%) or *Disagree* (10%).

In the item about “*Lack of citation skills from sources*”, we can easily see that a majority of the respondents say they *strongly agreed* with *Lack of citation skills from sources* (12%), there are 47 students (47%) who rate “*Agreed*” levels, 30 students (30%) who rate “*Neutral*” levels, a few reports “*Strongly disagree*” (2%) or *Disagree* (9%).

In the item about “*Lack of research time management skills*”, we can easily see that a majority of the respondents say they *strongly agreed* with *Lack of research time management skills* (11%), there are 47 students (47%) who rate “*Agreed*” levels, 31 students (31%) who rate “*Neutral*” levels, a few reports “*Strongly disagree*” (2%) or *Disagree* (9%).

In the item about “*No recommendations from faculty/schools/publishers about plagiarism*”, we can easily see that a majority of the respondents say they *strongly agreed* with *No recommendations from faculty/schools/publishers about plagiarism* (8%), there are 39 students (39%) who rate “*Agreed*” levels, 30 students (30%) who rate “*Neutral*” levels, a few reports “*Strongly disagree*” (7%) or *Disagree* (6%).

In the item about “*Plagiarism became common*”, we can easily see that a majority of the respondents say they *strongly agreed* with *Plagiarism became common* (6%), there are 12 students (12%) who rate “*Agreed*” levels, 35 students (35%) who rate “*Neutral*” levels, a few reports “*Strongly disagree*” (3%) or *Disagree* (12%).

In the item about “*Easily access and download free materials from Internet sources*”, we can easily see that a majority of the respondents say they *strongly agreed* with *Easily access and download free materials from Internet sources* (12%), there are 54 students (54%) who rate “*Agreed*” levels, 24 students (24%) who rate “*Neutral*” levels, a few reports “*Strongly disagree*” (2%) or *Disagree* (8%).

## 5. Discussion

From the results above, the respondents know plagiarism is a violation of academic ethics, plagiarism is a violation of intellectual property law, plagiarism hinders the development of science, plagiarism is a violation of the rules of Thu Dau Mot University. The

respondents reported knowing plagiarism is a violation of academic ethics. Students know that plagiarism is unethical, it is an academic crime, it is a kind of theft. Plagiarism is a violation of intellectual property law. The results above reflect the responses to the question if they know they violate property law for plagiarizing. This means that if they steal another person's idea and original content, they will violate the intellectual property law, which is a crime. A majority of the students are aware of the seriousness of plagiarism in intellectual property law, and gain common knowledge in intellectual property law. Copy leads to incorrect results, so plagiarism hinders the development of science. Although a majority of the students are aware of the seriousness of this item, but one quarter of respondents are neutral with this idea, this means that they don't have opinions, this means that students still do not have the correct perception of the above issues when they think that it does not hinder the development of science. And this can lead to unintentional plagiarism in the future. Its findings are a violation of the rules of Thu Dau Mot University. In order to promote and develop the quality of research, Thu Dau Mot University has a specific document on research ethics, which is noticed by all lecturers and students. The students are aware of the rules of Thu Dau Mot University about Plagiarism.

From the results above, there is similar responses from students who mostly *Copy a part/paragraph from a book/article verbatim without citing the source, Quoting part/paragraph from a book/article verbatim without using quotation marks, Summarize/rewrite content from books/articles without citing the source, Present/publish the work/research of a group in the name of an individual, Presenting/publicizing individual work/research results in the name of a group, Copied from the Internet without citing the source, Fabricated references, Fabricating and changing data in research, Translate a sentence/paragraph from a foreign language into Vietnamese without citing the source*; while (45%) were using *Copy your own/your group's/your own published assignment/dissertation/article*. Many students are accused of Self-plagiarism because they simply don't understand it and, therefore, don't know how to avoid it. These ten (10) types of plagiarism show that students use an easy way of getting information. In addition, a high percentage of students who are neutral (25%) with survey variables, this means that students still do not have the correct perception of the above issues when they think that it is not plagiarism. And this can lead to unintentional plagiarism in the future.

From the results above show similar responses based on conditions that students fall under on why they plagiarize. There are similar responses from students who plagiarize due to *the work/assignment/research being too difficult, Weak writing skills, Lack of skills in evaluating and organizing research resources, Pressure of completing essays/assignments at the end of the course*. A high percentage of students who blamed it on *Plagiarism became common, easily access and download free materials from Internet sources*. Although in the document on research ethics of Thu Dau Mot University also

plagiarism is mentioned, recommendations from faculty/lecturers about plagiarism, but a high percentage of students who blamed it on *No recommendations from faculty/school/publishers about plagiarism, Lack of citation skills from sources, Lack of research time management skills.*

The purpose of this study was to investigate Thu Dau Mot University Students Knowledge about the seriousness of Plagiarism, find out the most common types of plagiarism committed by students, and find out the possible common reasons a student unintentionally commits plagiarism.

It was encouraging to note that students responded positively in filling and sending the questionnaire and fairly answering to the sensitive questions about plagiarism in their own involvement and awareness of plagiarism. Both male and female students participated in this study with great zeal by timely replying to the filled questionnaires.

The study indicates that plagiarism does exist at Thu Dau Mot University and students are willing to take the risk of plagiarizing, regardless of knowing that it is unacceptable. The findings also confirm that plagiarism is common amongst students across all departments at Thu Dau Mot University.

From previous studies, Phan Thị Diễm Hương, Nguyễn Thị Minh Nghĩa (2017) explored the issue of awareness of plagiarism among students and young lecturers at School of Hospitality and Tourism – Hue University. The findings indicated that most students and young lecturers in the survey clearly recognized several forms of plagiarism, 66.1% participants admitted to having copied a short sentence/paragraph from the Internet into their test/essay/thesis more than twice; 40.4% copied a passage or sentence from someone else's test/essay/thesis/article into their own. The form of doing homework for others is also considered plagiarism, of which doing homework for others accounts for the highest rate of 40.4%; doing the PowerPoint presentation for 22.9% and 11.0% for a paragraph in the essay; however, the percentage of survey participants who have never done homework/presentation/essay for others is also high (25.7%). In our study, the findings point to a high awareness level among students of the ten types of plagiarism, students who mostly *Copy a part/paragraph from a book/article verbatim without citing the source, Quoting part/paragraph from a book/article verbatim without using quotation marks, Summarize/rewrite content from books/articles without citing the source, Present/publish the work/research of a group in the name of an individual, Presenting/publicizing individual work/research results in the name of a group, Copied from the Internet without citing the source, Fabricated references, Fabricating and changing data in research, Translate a sentence/paragraph from a foreign language into Vietnamese without citing the source;* while (45%) were using *Copy your own/your group's/your own published assignment/dissertation/article.*

## 6. Conclusion

The research identifies knowledge of plagiarism and ability to recognize plagiaristic writing among TDMU students, the most common types of plagiarism were committed by students and finding out the possible common reasons a student unintentionally commits plagiarism. The conclusions that we have reached so far are that:

Students have a greater awareness of the seriousness of plagiarism. They understand that Plagiarism is cheating, a serious form of academic ethics, the ethics of plagiarism is merely the ethics of stealing, plagiarism is a serious form of Copyright violations and Plagiarism is a serious form of academic dishonesty punishable by Thu Dau Mot university. This means that the majority of students are aware of plagiarism and the consequences of plagiarizing.

It is clear that plagiarism is fairly common on campus and students are aware of it. The findings point to a high awareness level among students of the ten types of plagiarism. Students who mostly copy a part/paragraph from a book/article verbatim without citing the source, quoting a part/paragraph from a book/an article verbatim without using quotation marks, summarize/rewrite the content from books/articles without citing the source, copied from the Internet without citing the sources, Fabricated references, Fabricating and changing data in research, translate a sentence/paragraph from a foreign language into Vietnamese without citing the source.

Causes of plagiarism include the work/assignment/research is too difficult, weak writing skills, lack of skills in evaluating and organizing research resources, pressure of completing essays/ assignments at the end of the course, plagiarism has become increasingly popular, there are free and accessible sources of scholarly information online.

In conclusion, the study indicates that plagiarism does exist at Thu Dau Mot University and students are willing to take the risk of plagiarizing, regardless of knowing that it is unacceptable. The findings also confirm that plagiarism is common amongst students across all departments at Thu Dau Mot University.

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