

The Role of Digital Literacy in Preventing Academic Plagiarism Among PBA Students

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ABSTRACT

The Role of Digital Literacy in Preventing Academic Plagiarism Among PBA Students. Academic plagiarism is an important issue in higher education because it directly affects the quality of education and the scientific integrity of students. This problem is becoming increasingly complex due to the diversity of available digital information sources, requiring a deeper understanding of student behavior and experiences. This study aims to examine the role of digital literacy in preventing plagiarism among students of the Arabic Language Education Study Program (PBA) at IAI Badrus Sholeh. Using a descriptive qualitative method, data were collected through interviews, observations, and document reviews, then analyzed using a thematic approach. The results reveal that students with better digital literacy skills tend to be able to search, verify, and manage references correctly, thereby reducing the risk of plagiarism. Digital literacy encompasses technical skills as well as ethical and critical understanding of online sources. Therefore, strengthening digital literacy through training, workshops, and academic guidance is a strategic step toward building an ethical, honest, and responsible academic culture that avoids plagiarism.

Keywords: Digital literacy, academic plagiarism, PBA, scientific integrity

Introduction

Advances in digital technology have brought fundamental changes to higher education, particularly in terms of learning and academic work production. Accessibility to various digital information sources via the internet provides students with ample opportunities to deepen their scientific references. However, this convenience also presents new and worrying problems, such as an increasing tendency towards academic plagiarism among students (Pratiwi & Aisya, 2021). This problem becomes more complex with the ease of access to various digital information sources. Therefore, students are required to have strong digital literacy skills to be able to manage, assess, and cite sources appropriately to prevent plagiarism.

Academic plagiarism is a serious problem in higher education because of its significant impact on the quality of education and scientific integrity. Plagiarism is not merely a violation of academic norms, but also undermines scientific credibility and the overall quality of higher education (Malufu et al., 2024). Plagiarism in academia refers to the act of using the ideas, concepts, or work of others without providing adequate acknowledgement or references. In the current era of information technology, plagiarism practices are becoming increasingly varied, ranging from raw copy-paste activities, rewriting sentences without citing the appropriate sources, to utilising scientific writing services that violate ethics (Dahlan, 2024). The development of digital literacy serves as a strategic solution in efforts to prevent plagiarism among students. Digital literacy functions not only as a technical competency but also as an ethical foundation that plays a role in fostering academic integrity and reducing or minimising the occurrence of plagiarism, particularly in Arabic Language Education (PBA) programmes.

The Arabic Language Education Study Programme has its own distinctive characteristics, given that its students are expected to master Arabic language skills while being able to produce high-quality academic work. First, they must be able to access and understand literature in Arabic and other languages. Second, they need to have strong academic integrity in processing and presenting this information in their scientific writings (pangesti,dkk, 2023). However, a lack of understanding of citation and referencing ethics, coupled with ease of digital access, makes students prone to plagiarism, whether conscious or unconscious. Therefore, students are expected to be able to distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources, understand the urgency of intellectual attribution, and master the correct citation and reference management techniques by utilising various supporting software such as Mendeley, Zotero, or similar applications.

The lack of experience and behaviour of PBA students in interacting with multilingual digital sources is a gap that needs to be filled. Low digital literacy puts students at risk of plagiarism without understanding the academic and moral implications of such acts. This is related to the large number of studies on academic plagiarism and digital literacy that are still general in nature and have not explored in detail how digital literacy contributes to the prevention of plagiarism in Arabic language learning (Ardinal & Alamin, 2025). This study presents a novelty by comprehensively exploring the relationship between digital literacy and plagiarism prevention practices among PBA students and exploring the ethical, critical, and technical dimensions of digital literacy in the context of Arabic language learning. Thus, the role of wise use of digital literacy can strengthen an ethical, honest, and responsible academic culture in order to reduce the rate of plagiarism.

Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of comprehensively exploring how digital literacy contributes to preventive efforts against academic plagiarism among students of the Arabic Language Education Study Programme (PBA) at IAI Badrus Sholeh. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand the phenomenon from the participants'

perspective comprehensively, so that the data obtained is natural, contextual, and comprehensive (Sugiyono, 2020). The research subjects were PBA students who actively attended lectures and were writing scientific papers, articles, or theses. The sample was taken using purposive sampling to ensure that the selected informants were relevant to the research focus, particularly students who had experience using digital sources in academic writing (Creswell, 2007). In addition, academic supervisors were also involved to provide insights into the process of fostering academic ethics.

The data collection techniques used were in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation study (Moleong, 2014). The interviews aimed to explore students' experiences in accessing, evaluating, and using digital sources. Observations were conducted by observing students' behaviour when doing academic assignments, while documentation focused on analysing students' written work to assess indications of plagiarism and compliance with scientific writing ethics. The data analysis process used thematic analysis, which consisted of three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. In the reduction stage, data was selected according to the focus of the study and then presented in the form of a narrative description to make it easier to understand patterns of student digital literacy behaviour. Next, conclusions were drawn to find the relationship between digital literacy skills and the prevention of plagiarism. Meanwhile, to determine the validity and reliability of the research results, source and method triangulation were used. Source triangulation was carried out by comparing data from students and lecturers, while method triangulation integrated the results of interviews, observations, and documentation. This approach strengthened the accuracy and credibility of the data scientifically (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Results

Overview of Digital Literacy among Students in the Arabic Language Education Study Programme

Digital literacy is one of the important competencies that students must possess in the era of society 5.0, especially in academic aspects. The development of information technology has made the learning process and scientific writing increasingly dependent on digital sources, such as e-journals, e-books, and online learning platforms. Based on the results of a study conducted on students of the Arabic Language Education Study Programme (PBA) at IAI Badrus Sholeh, it was found that the level of digital literacy among students varied (high, medium, and low). This study describes several important aspects related to students' digital literacy skills, including:

Digital Information Access Skills

The findings show that students of the Arabic Language Education Study Programme (PBA) at IAI Badrus Sholeh have a fairly good level of digital literacy in terms of basic technology use, such as searching for references on the internet, operating software, accessing online journals, and evaluating and managing

digital information. As explained by one of the students (Ismahani, semester 7) who was a respondent in the study, she said that:

"The digital literacy competence of students in the Arabic Language Education Study Programme (PBA) at IAI Badrus Sholeh varies from high, medium, and low. In addition, when writing papers, articles or proposals, we always use Google Scholar or other online journal sites, but we sometimes still have difficulty finding the references we need to use, even though we use the Zotero application." (I. Nurul, personal communication, September 26, 2025)

This indicates that PBA students are accustomed to utilising digital media, but still face challenges in understanding academic ethics, particularly regarding plagiarism.

As a result, most students have acquired basic skills in accessing digital information through various platforms. Students are able to use search engines such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and electronic journal portals to find academic references. However, these skills are still limited to technical operational aspects without an in-depth understanding of effective search strategies (Derenne, dkk, 2025). When searching for reference sources, students tend to use simple keywords and rarely utilise advanced search features that can produce more specific and relevant results. This is in line with findings that digital literacy is not merely the ability to operate technology, but also includes the skill of determining the right information search strategy (Vuorikari et al., 2022). Digital literacy not only includes technical skills in operating technological devices, but also the critical ability to evaluate information, as well as ethical awareness in using it so as to reduce and prevent plagiarism.

Ability to Evaluate and Verify Sources

A crucial aspect of digital literacy is the ability to evaluate the credibility of information sources. Research shows that students experience significant difficulties in verifying the accuracy of digital sources. Most students do not yet have the critical thinking skills to assess the validity, accuracy, and relevance of information found online. Students tend to accept information at face value without cross-checking the credibility of the author, the reputation of the publisher, or the research methodology used. This limitation has the potential to increase the risk of using non-credible sources in academic work, which can ultimately lead to unintentional plagiarism (Wineburg, SarahMcGrew, 2019)

In addition, their digital literacy skills are uneven and still limited to the instant use of information without verifying or validating the sources obtained because they are unable to distinguish between valid and invalid sources, putting them at risk of misquoting. This statement is reinforced by Mirza A.'s research, which states that students often lack the critical skills to assess the quality of digital information (Pratiwi & Aisya, 2021). Therefore, information evaluation skills are a fundamental competency in digital literacy that must be mastered to prevent the misuse of sources.

Reference Management and Citation Skills

Research findings indicate significant weaknesses in reference management and the application of proper citation systems. The majority of students are

unfamiliar with reference management applications such as Mendeley, Zotero, or EndNote, which can help organise sources and automatically generate bibliographies according to specific citation styles. The inability to manage references makes it difficult for students to track the sources they have read and increases the likelihood of unintentional plagiarism. Many students do not understand the difference between quoting, paraphrasing, and summarising, and do not know when and how to properly attribute other people's ideas (Gaffar et al., n.d.). It is important to include citations to avoid copying in its entirety and thus avoid plagiarism. Students with low digital literacy are more prone to plagiarism because they are not accustomed to managing citations and bibliographies correctly. Meanwhile, students with high digital literacy tend to be more thorough in searching for and managing references, thereby significantly reducing the risk of plagiarism, and vice versa.

Forms of Plagiarism

This study identifies various forms of plagiarism committed by students, both consciously and unconsciously.

1. **Literal Plagiarism (Copy-Paste)**

The most common form of plagiarism found is literal plagiarism or copy-paste, where students copy text directly from digital sources without providing adequate quotation marks or attribution. This practice is often done due to time constraints, a lack of understanding of how to paraphrase correctly, or a misperception that information on the internet is in the public domain and free to use (Hariyati, 2018). The ease of access to various digital sources allows students to copy-paste quickly without considering the ethical and academic implications. Adequate digital literacy should make students understand that ease of access does not equate to freedom of use without attribution (Combes, 2005).

2. **Patchwork Plagiarism (Mosaic)**

The second form of plagiarism identified is patchwork plagiarism, which involves compiling a piece of writing by combining text fragments from various sources without providing clear references. Students tend to take sentences or paragraphs from several sources, then combine them into a text that appears to be new, when in fact its substance is a compilation of other people's work (Pecorari & Petrić, 2014). This practice shows that students do not yet understand the essence of authentic academic writing, which is to develop personal arguments and analyses based on a synthesis of the literature that has been studied. Good digital literacy includes the ability to synthesise information from various sources into new insights from the author's own perspective.

3. **Inadequate Paraphrasing Plagiarism**

This type of plagiarism occurs when students attempt to paraphrase the source text but the result is too similar to the original, both in terms of sentence structure and word choice. Although there is an attempt to change the words, the substance and line of thought still follow the original source without substantial transformation. The inability to paraphrase effectively indicates weaknesses in information literacy and academic writing skills.

Students need a deep understanding of how to absorb ideas from sources and then re-express them in their own language and thought structure while retaining the original meaning (Jin et al., 2020).

4. Self-Plagiarism

A form of plagiarism that is often overlooked is self-plagiarism, which is the reuse of one's own work that has been collected for other assignments without notification or permission (Soelistyo, n.d.). Even though one's own work is being used, this practice is still considered unethical in an academic context because each assignment should be a new, original work.

Factors Influencing Plagiarism

Plagiarism is influenced by several factors, including the following: (Khotimah, 2024)

1. Knowledge and Awareness Factors

Research findings reveal that a lack of knowledge about plagiarism and its consequences is a major factor contributing to high rates of plagiarism. Many students do not fully understand what plagiarism is, its forms, and why it is a serious violation in the academic world. This knowledge gap highlights the need for improved digital literacy that focuses not only on technical aspects but also on understanding academic ethics and scientific integrity. Comprehensive digital literacy includes awareness of copyright, digital content licensing, and the obligation to provide proper attribution.

2. Technical and Methodological Skills

Limited technical skills in using anti-plagiarism tools, reference management applications, and digital academic platforms make it difficult for students to apply proper academic practices. Students who are unfamiliar with plagiarism detection software such as Turnitin or Grammarly tend to be unaware of the extent to which their work resembles other sources. In addition, the inability to consistently use standard citation styles (such as APA, MLA, or Chicago) indicates a weakness in digital academic literacy. In fact, this skill is an integral part of digital literacy that students must master in order to produce credible and ethical academic work.

3. Motivation and Academic Pressure Factors

The pressure to meet assignment deadlines, achieve high grades, and cope with excessive academic workloads drives some students to take shortcuts by plagiarising. This situation is exacerbated by a lack of time management and adequate writing skills. Good digital literacy should equip students with the efficiency to search for, manage, and integrate information, thereby reducing time pressure and improving the quality of academic work without resorting to plagiarism.

4. Environmental and Academic Culture Factors

An academic culture that does not emphasise the importance of integrity and ethics contributes to the normalisation of plagiarism. When plagiarism is considered normal or there are no strict sanctions against perpetrators, students tend not to feel that such actions are serious and should be avoided.

The Role of Digital Literacy in Preventing Plagiarism

Digital literacy plays an important role in preventing academic plagiarism in education, namely:

1. **Digital Literacy as the Foundation of Academic Integrity**

Research findings show a positive correlation between digital literacy levels and ethical academic behaviour. For example, students with high digital literacy levels demonstrate better ability to understand, select, and use information responsibly. They are not only able to access and use information effectively, but also have moral awareness of the value of originality in scientific work. Digital literacy encourages students to respect copyright, attribute correctly, and understand the importance of originality in academic writing (Hariyono et al., 2025). Thus, digital literacy not only serves as a technical skill but also as an ethical foundation that strengthens academic integrity in the digital age.

2. **Digital Literacy as the Searching and Evaluating Source**

Students with good digital literacy are able to use effective information search strategies, identify credible sources, and cross-verify the information they find. This ability is very important to ensure that the references used in academic work are valid, relevant, and accountable (Rafi, 2019). Digital literacy also equips students with the critical ability to evaluate the bias, accuracy, and purpose of digital information sources. Students learn to question the credibility of authors, check publication dates, and verify information through various sources before using it in academic writing. Thus, digital literacy in searching and evaluating sources is an important foundation for students to produce credible and ethical scientific work.

3. **Digital Literacy as the Information and Reference Management**

The ability to manage information systematically is an important aspect of digital literacy that contributes directly to the prevention of plagiarism. Students who are skilled in using reference management applications can organise reading sources, make structured notes, and produce citations and bibliographies accurately and consistently. The use of digital tools such as Mendeley, Zotero, or Reference Manager not only increases efficiency but also reduces the risk of errors in citations that can lead to unintentional plagiarism (Herawan et al., 2023). Digital literacy ensures that students understand how these tools work and can use them optimally to support academic integrity. Thus, digital literacy in information and reference management is an important foundation in building an ethical and credible research culture. Through the appropriate use of technology, students can write scientific papers responsibly, efficiently, and free from plagiarism.

4. **Digital Literacy as the Understanding the Ethics and Law of Digital Content**

The ethical aspects of digital literacy are an important dimension that guides students to be responsible in using and producing information in the digital space. Digital literacy does not only focus on technical skills in accessing or processing information, but also includes a deep understanding of ethical values and legal aspects surrounding digital content, including copyright, Creative Commons licences, fair use principles, and the legal consequences of intellectual property rights violations (Dwihadiah, dkk,

2024). Students with good digital literacy awareness understand that every digital work has a legitimate owner whose rights must be respected, both in an academic context and in digital life in general.

Students who are aware will be more careful in quoting, sharing, and using digital material, because they realise the ethical and legal implications of each action (Judijanto, dkk, 2024). In other words, digital literacy in understanding the ethics and laws of digital content is a strategic element in building academic integrity in the digital age. Students who are digitally literate will grow into individuals who are not only smart in using technology, but also wise in respecting the rights and work of others. This understanding forms the basis for the creation of an academic community that is civilised, fair, and ethical in managing digital knowledge globally.

5. Digital Literacy as the Use of Anti-Plagiarism Tools

Students with good digital literacy are familiar with various plagiarism detection tools and understand how to use them to check the originality of their work before submission. Proactive use of tools such as Turnitin, Plagscan, or Grammarly demonstrates a commitment to academic integrity and a desire to ensure that the work produced is free from plagiarism (Nurhayati et al., 2024). Digital literacy also includes the ability to interpret the results of anti-plagiarism tools, understand the difference between legitimate similarities (such as standard definitions or correct quotations) and actual plagiarism, and make appropriate revisions to reduce the level of similarity without sacrificing the substance of the content.

The use of anti-plagiarism tools also supports the academic reflection process. Students learn to review sentence structure, improve paraphrasing, and strengthen arguments with more relevant and valid sources. This process indirectly fosters an academic culture of honesty, discipline, and responsibility. Thus, digital literacy in the use of anti-plagiarism tools not only functions as a monitoring mechanism but also as a learning tool that strengthens the ethics and quality of student research. The use of technology is not only a tool but also a foundation for building solid academic integrity in today's digital age.

Discussion

The results of the study indicate that digital literacy is not a single skill, but rather a multidimensional competency that encompasses technical, critical, and ethical aspects that influence the prevention of academic plagiarism (Schneider, 2023). The technical aspect emphasises students' ability to operate various digital devices such as plagiarism detection software, reference management applications, and scientific information search platforms. However, technical skills alone are not sufficient without critical understanding of the content and validity of digital sources. The critical aspect helps students assess the credibility of information, integrate data with academic context, and produce original work based on reflective analysis. Meanwhile, the ethical aspect plays an important role in shaping awareness of academic responsibility, copyright, and scientific integrity values in the digital environment. In addition, digital literacy contributes

significantly to the formation of ethical academic behaviour. Students with high digital literacy demonstrate changes in the way they think and act when interacting with information sources. They understand that digital traces are permanent and easily verifiable, so that plagiarism can be quickly detected. Digital literacy also increases academic self-efficacy because students are equipped with the ability to search for, evaluate, and manage scientific references correctly, so that they are more confident. Students with high digital literacy demonstrate changes in their thinking and behaviour when interacting with information sources. They understand that digital traces are permanent and easily verifiable, so that plagiarism can be quickly detected. Digital literacy also increases academic self-efficacy because students are equipped with the ability to search for, evaluate, and manage scientific references correctly, so that they are more confident in writing academic works independently and originally (Calderon,dkk, 2022).

In the Arabic Language Education Study Programme, digital literacy provides a unique aspect in the discussion of digital literacy and plagiarism prevention. Arabic Language Education students face a double challenge: not only must they master digital literacy in Indonesian and English, but they also need to develop digital literacy in Arabic. The ability to access, evaluate, and use Arabic-language sources from digital databases such as Al-Maktaba Al-Syamilah, or Arabic journals requires more complex digital literacy (2025, بوزيدي). Students must be familiar with platforms and tools specific to Arabic, understand the transliteration and reference writing systems for Arabic texts, and be able to distinguish between classical and contemporary sources. This challenge is also an opportunity to develop a digital literacy model that integrates digital competence with Arabic language learning. The relationship between digital literacy and plagiarism prevention can be seen from several perspectives, including: (Dahlan, 2024)

- a. Digital literacy improves students' competence in the technical skills required for ethical academic practices, such as effective source searching, credibility evaluation, reference management, and the use of anti-plagiarism tools. This increase in competence directly reduces plagiarism because students have alternative abilities to produce original work.
- b. Digital literacy increases students' awareness of plagiarism, its consequences, and the importance of academic integrity. This awareness acts as an internal control that prevents students from committing plagiarism even when there is an opportunity to do so without being detected.
- c. Students with good digital literacy have higher academic self-efficacy. They believe in their ability to produce quality academic work without resorting to plagiarism. This reduces academic anxiety and eliminates the motivation to plagiarise.
- d. Digital literacy shapes students' understanding of norms and expectations in the digital academic community, thereby minimising the desire to plagiarise. This is related to an academic culture that upholds the value of integrity.

- e. The development of lecturers' capacity also influences digital literacy. Lecturers play a key role as role models and facilitators of digital literacy learning. They need to have good digital literacy, a deep understanding of plagiarism issues, and pedagogical skills to teach ethical academic practices.

Although digital literacy has great potential in preventing academic plagiarism, its implementation in higher education still faces a number of structural and cultural (Agustini & Sucihati, 2020). First, the digital divide is a major challenge that causes inequality in access to technology and the internet. Students from low-income backgrounds often do not have adequate devices or stable internet connections, which limits their ability to optimally develop digital literacy competencies. Second, there is resistance to change, both among students and lecturers. Some members of the academic community still feel comfortable with conventional methods and consider the application of digital technology as an additional workload, rather than as a learning tool that supports academic effectiveness. Third, the complexity of the digital ecosystem is also a serious obstacle. The rapid development of information technology means that tools, applications, and digital platforms that are relevant today may become obsolete in the next few years. Therefore, adaptive and continuous learning capabilities are needed to maintain the relevance of students' digital competencies.

In addition, limited institutional resources are also a major obstacle in higher education. Many institutions do not yet have adequate digital infrastructure, official software licences, professional training, or competent technical support staff to support the systematic development of digital literacy. In addition to the various roles of digital literacy and the many challenges that must be faced, a strategy is needed to strengthen digital literacy in order to prevent academic plagiarism as much as possible. First, curriculum integration is a fundamental step so that digital literacy is not just an addition, but an integral part of learning in every study programme (Setiawan, 2021). Second, a tiered training programme needs to be developed, starting from orientation for new students to advanced training for final-year students who are writing their dissertations or theses. Third, the peer learning approach is effective because it allows students with high digital literacy skills to become mentors for their peers who are still learning.

Project-based learning is also recommended to hone students' digital skills in a real-world context, such as writing scientific papers or creating research proposals with the support of anti-plagiarism tools. Finally, collaboration with librarians plays a strategic role because librarians generally have special expertise in information literacy, reference source management, and academic ethics training. Synergy between lecturers, librarians, and students can strengthen an academic culture that upholds the values of honesty, responsibility, and scientific integrity in the digital age.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the research and discussion, it can be concluded that digital literacy plays a crucial role in preventing academic plagiarism in

higher education, especially among students of the Arabic Language Education Study Programme (PBA) at IAI Badrus Sholeh. Digital literacy is not only defined as the technical ability to use digital devices and platforms, but also includes critical and ethical competencies in managing information. Students with strong digital literacy are able to search for, evaluate, and cite reference sources correctly, thereby significantly reducing the risk of plagiarism.

In addition, various implementation challenges such as the technology access gap, resistance to innovation, and limited institutional resources also affect the effectiveness of digital literacy programmes on campus. Therefore, strengthening digital literacy must be systematically integrated into the learning curriculum and supported by comprehensive strategies. These efforts can be carried out through training programmes, peer learning approaches, project-based learning, and academic guidance through active collaboration between lecturers, students, and librarians. This strategy not only improves students' technical competencies but also fosters ethical awareness and academic responsibility in the digital age so that digital literacy can prevent academic plagiarism.

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