

How Training in Scholarly Writing by University Libraries Supports Postgraduate Research at University of Embu and Kenya Methodist University in Kenya

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Abstract

Academic dishonesty is a significant challenge facing postgraduate research in universities. While this challenge persists, students across the globe continue to enrol in postgraduate studies. Universities employ various measures to mitigate academic dishonesty, including using antiplagiarism software, creating academic dishonesty awareness, and training students on scholarly writing. However, academic dishonesty continues to persist in postgraduate research, lowering research quality. The current study sought to investigate how training scholarly writing supports postgraduate research at the University of Embu (UoEM) and Kenya Methodist University (KeMU) in Kenya. The research used a survey research design. The target population was 1008 participants, consisting of postgraduate students, Directors of Postgraduate Studies, and librarians. Using Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) formula, the study used a sample size of 208 participants, including 195 postgraduate students, two directors of postgraduate studies, and 11 librarians. The research used stratified random sampling to establish the research sample and simple random sampling within each population stratum. Interviews and questionnaires were used to collect data from the respondents. Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis were used to analyse research data. The study established that training in scholarly writing is an effective approach in mitigating academic dishonesty. The findings indicated that postgraduate research is vital in academics. Therefore, the use of scholarly writing training as a mitigation measure against academic dishonesty among postgraduate students is necessary. The training approaches used by many universities to introduce postgraduate students to scholarly writing concepts include practical training and orientation of new students. The research recommended inclusion of training in scholarly writing to the curriculum. Further, it recommended collaboration of all stakeholders to identify areas that need more emphasis and training, and to incorporate social media platforms and student university portals in the training.

Keywords: Academic dishonesty, scholarly training, postgraduate research, postgraduate students, libraries, research quality

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1.0 Introduction

Universities worldwide continue to report cases of academic dishonesty despite the practice being extremely unethical and unprofessional. According to Parks-Leduc et al. (2021), cheating among postgraduate students is a professional crime in academic society. Academic dishonesty has made academic integrity the focus of many studies in the postgraduate research. The proliferation of this misconduct in higher learning institutions is a subject of concern (Awasthi, 2019). This submission is supported by other authors like Krou et al. (2021) and Baran and Jonason, (2020). According to Awasthi (2019), one of the approaches that institutions of higher learning adopt to mitigate academic dishonesty in postgraduate research is training postgraduate students in scholarly writing. Unlike undergraduate programs with many students, postgraduate programs have fewer students owing to the demands of the postgraduate courses (Fatemi & Saito, 2020).

They are associated with substantial research projects, dissertations, and theses. These research requirements are the major features and indicators of postgraduate studies. One of the postgraduate degrees is to complete research project, dissertation or thesis. The challenging nature of research makes postgraduate students engage in academic dishonesty and other integrity issues (Muraraneza et al., 2020). As a requirement, academic research must be original. Therefore, postgraduate students are required to submit original dissertation or thesis. This is a demanding requirement that tempts many postgraduate students to engage in academic dishonesty. Academic

dishonesty is the most prevalent academic crime among postgraduate students. Therefore, there is need to train postgraduate students on scholarly writing to support quality research and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is a global concern (Simpson, 2016). In Europe, Ruipérez and García-Cabrero (2016) assert that countries like Germany have grappled with academic dishonesty in higher learning institutions since the 18th century. They observe that academic dishonesty in doctoral theses is manifest where postgraduate students present plagiarized papers, usually in the scientific discipline. For instance, The Guardian (2013) reported that Germany's education minister lost his job because his Ph.D. research had been plagiarism. Africa also suffers from academic dishonesty in its higher education. Moten (2014) submits that although university libraries strive to mitigate the practice, the Muslim world, including Egypt, has significant academic dishonesty. Kenya also experienced this challenge.

In 2019, Kenyan media made headlines after a senior lecturer at Kenyatta University was stripped of their Ph.D. due to academic dishonesty (Kukali, 2022). Waithaka and Gitimu (2012) have also reported cases of students copying other writings and submitting them for marking as their original work. Nevertheless, institutions of higher learning that offer postgraduate education, including Kenya Methodist University (KeMU) and the University of Embu (UoEM), have instituted mitigation measures to address academic dishonesty amongst postgraduate students. One of the mitigation measures



put in place is to train students on scholarly writing through their libraries.

Statement of the Problem

University libraries have been leading in the fight against academic dishonesty. A standard library should have an academic dishonesty mitigation programme (O'Donnell et al., 2020; Eaton & Hughes, 2022). University libraries are also expected to establish academic writing training programs to teach postgraduate students how to write scholarly articles to avoid plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. The Commission for University Education (CUE) requires postgraduate students to demonstrate innovation, novelty, independence, professionalism and academic integrity in their writing (CUE, 2014). Despite these institutions of requirements, higher learning continue to report academic dishonesty in term papers, theses and dissertations submitted by students. Failing to address academic dishonesty in higher learning institutions could lead to a highly unprofessional academic society, which lacks in ethics evident in significant violation of authors' copyrights.

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The high number of academic dishonesties reported in universities portray low uptake of scholarly writing training (Musau &

Boibanda, 2017). Selemani et al. (2018), Olivia-Dumitrina et al. (2019) and Olivia-Dumitrina et al. (2019) consider academic dishonesty as an unethical practice that can be mitigated through scholarly writing training. The current study sought to establish how training in academic writing can mitigate academic dishonesty among postgraduate students.

Purpose of the study

This paper investigates how scholarly writing training by university libraries supports postgraduate research at university of Embu and Kenya Methodist University in Kenya

Objective

The main objective of this research was to examine how training in scholarly writing by university libraries support postgraduate research at KeMU and UoEM.

Research Question

How does training in scholarly writing by libraries support postgraduate research at Kenya Methodist University and University of Embu?

Literature Review

Scholarly writing entails academic skills and essential elements of academic writing. It ensures that postgraduate students acquire practical and theoretical skills to produce and present written work in their academic scholarly endeavour (Adom, 2021). Scholarly writing training supports research by providing analysis, summarizing, synthesizing, and evaluation skills that give postgraduate students engagement academic effective with and resources materials that they



incorporate in their research (Adom, 2021). Melnychuk et al. (2021) claim that one essential characteristic of the research process is to provide access to university information resources through libraries. Putri and Saputra (2021) assert that research projects entail the writing of proposals, theses, and dissertations. These are components of scholarly writing, which require postgraduate students to write academic articles and present them to their faculty for possible publications. Melnychuk et al. (2021) claim that these components are pitched toward academic writing training to support researchers in advancing their research practices through academic writing making libraries an indispensable element in postgraduate research scholarly support.

The changes experienced in ICT and academic requirements have compelled libraries to evolve in order to adapt to the technological changes (Jalal, Nevertheless, it has become evident that university libraries need to train postgraduate students on the various methodologies before they submit their research findings (Selemani et al., 2018). Pickton (2016) observes that libraries could realize scholarly training through publications and conferences. Rop (2017) notes the need for academic writing training among research students in Kenyan universities. Ard and Ard (2019) claim that the demand for academic training staff remains high with the proliferation of electronic academic resources and services available for research assistance. Besides, the high cases of plagiarism in postgraduate student research papers, as demonstrated by Stoesz and Eaton (2020), increase the need for training postgraduate students on academic writing.

2.0 Materials and methods

The study adopted a survey research design to investigate the impact of scholarly writing training in academic dishonesty mitigation at selected universities in Kenya. Data was collected through interviews and questionnaires. The target population comprised postgraduate students, directors of postgraduate studies, and librarians working in university libraries. Stratified random sampling and simple random sampling were used to obtain the sample size. Students were divided into strata based on their departments. The sample size was determined using the 10% - 30% sampling formula by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003). Then, 20% of the postgraduates (195) and 30% of the librarians (11) were identified as adequate in this study. The study also incorporated two directors of postgraduate studies, one from KeMU and the other one from UoEM. The sample size was 216 participants obtained from a population of 1008.

The study used interviews and questionnaires to collect data from the research participants. Interviews were used on directors of postgraduate studies and librarians, while questionnaires were used on postgraduate students. The research instruments were subjected to pre-testing to identify problem areas, reduce data measurement errors, and ensure the order of the questions did not affect participants' responses. The validity of the research instruments was also tested by comparing the variance between two different results; namely, the pre-test study results and the actual results. The study ascertained construct and content validity. The researcher used Cronbach's alpha measure internal consistency. According to Bonett and Wright (2015), the Cronbach's



alpha value of 0.7 or above applies as a cutoff mark to identify the reliability of a research instrument. The research used descriptive statistics to analyze quantitative data, where frequency, mean and standard deviation were computed, and thematic analysis was used to analyze qualitative data.

3.0 Results and discussion

Response rate

N - 100

The study investigated the use of training by university libraries to enhance quality postgraduate research. The response rate for the research was 190 (97.43%), 8

Table 1

Execution of training on scholarly writing

(72.7%), and 2 (100%) for postgraduate students, librarians, and directors of postgraduate studies, respectively. This response rate met the threshold (a sample of less than 300 participants) given by Al Khalaf et al. (2022) making it viable to continue with the research.

Results from Postgraduate Students

The postgraduate students who participated in the study were required to identify training strategies used by their institutions to support postgraduate research. The results from postgraduate students are summarized in Table 1.

Valid Darcent

N = 190	riequency	valid Percelli
Regular practical training	90	47.4
 Providing reliable sources 	70	36.8
 Orientation of new students 	30	15.8
Total	190	100.0
The table indicates that institutions of	them in academic wri	iting. These results
higher learning use several approaches to	align with findings by	Ghani (2020) who

train postgraduate students in scholarly writing. According to most postgraduate students, regular practical training 90 (47.4%) is the most common training approach. It was followed by providing reliable sources 70 (36.8%). Other students 30 (15.8%) reported that their universities orient new students whenever they enroll. The findings are consistent with those reported by the librarians, who reported that practical training was the most prevalent method and students' orientation as the least prevalent approach. These findings demonstrate that students recognize their respective institutions' initiatives to train them in academic writing. These results align with findings by Ghani (2020) who observes that training approaches to support scholarly writing have increased in the last decade because of the increasing demand for scholarly training strategies. Therefore, the student's knowledge about the approaches used may be credited to the increasing emphasis on the training and the application of the current approaches. Further, the students know how each training approach impacts their scholarly writing ability.

Students were also given several statements on the training procedures undertaken by their institutions' libraries. They were requested to specify the extent to which the



initiatives reflect their libraries' practices. The primary characteristics examined in this case include training, effectiveness, cognizance of training materials, individual training, group training, and inclusion of recent trends in the scholarly writing training process. The findings are presented in Table

Table 2

Training Approaches

	0 11						3.6	G. 1. D.
Statements writing (N = 19	training in libraries	VSE	SE	ME	LE	VLE	Mean	Std. Dev
a)	Postgraduate students are trained in academic and scholarly writing		10 (5.3%)	50 (26.3%)	80 (42.1%)	50 (26.3%)	1.68	.731
b)	Scholarly training offered by the university library is effective in addressing academic dishonesty		10 (5.3%)	40 (21.1%)	80 (42.1%)	60 (31.6%)	3.89	.854
c)	Postgraduate students are trained on recent trends in academic and scholarly training		10 (5.6%)	40 (22.2%)	90 (50%)	40 (22.2%)	4.00	.861
d)	Our library holds regular practical scholarly writing training		10 (5.3%)	70 (38.9%)	30 (16.7%)	70 (38.9%)	3.89	.811
e)	Postgraduate students are trained in groups of their respective academic programs			60 (33.3%)	80 (44.4%)	40 (21.2%)	3.89	.997
f)	Postgraduate students are also trained individually upon request.			60 (33.3%)	40 (21.1%)	80 (44.4%)	3.89	.739
g)	Postgraduate students recognize the scholarly writing resources in the library			30 (16.7%)	70 (38.9%)	80 (44.4%)	4.11	.877

Table 2 shows that most postgraduate students 80 (42.1%) receive training in scholarly writing. Further, most students 80 (42.1%) consider scholarly writing training

provided by their institutions effective in curbing academic dishonesty. 90 (50%) of the participants rated training postgraduate students on current trends as effective to a



large extent, while 22.2% rated its effectiveness to a very large extent. The rating differed from the institutional libraries holding practical scholarly writing training. On this, 70 (38.9%) of participants rated it as being moderately effective. However, 38.9% said it was effective to a large extent. These results demonstrate that higher learning institutions have invested profoundly in training postgraduate students on scholarly writing because of it improves their academic outcomes. This observation agrees with Manzoor et al. (2019)submission, that training is frequently applied to intensify people's job performance. Therefore, regular practical scholarly training by universities ensures students gain skills necessary for their education and professions.

All the participants confirmed that postgraduate students participate in group training based on their respective study programs, with the responses ranging from "moderate" to a "very large extent". This was also the case for individual training on academic writing, whereby 80 (44.4%) of the students reported that the practice is **Table 3**

common to a very large extent. 70 (38.9%) and 80 (44.4%) of the postgraduate students indicated that students were aware of scholarly writing materials in their institutions' libraries to a large extent and a very large extent, respectively.

These results showed that the studied universities similar used training explaining approaches. the similar responses shared by the participants from the two institutions. These findings support Stephen et al. (2021) assertion that accessible training courses enable institutions to access information to promote students' academic integrity and include them in their operations. The choice of the two universities with regard to scholarly training approaches alludes to their effectiveness in imparting students with the required skills and overcoming postgraduate academic writing challenges. Students were also asked to indicate the most effective suggestions to improve scholarly writing training. The results are presented in Table 3.

Suggestions to Improve Scholarly Writing Training

N = 190		Frequency	Valid
			Percent
a.	Regular training and sharing of materials	70	36.8
b.	Awareness and schedule training	20	10.5
c.	Scholarly training in the curriculum as a common unit	60	31.6
d.	Include AI tools in training to sensitize students on them	20	10.5
e.	Consult experienced people to train postgraduate students on scholarly writing	20	10.5
Total		190	100.0



Although the students reported scholarly writing training programs exist in their respective institutions, improving them was needed to enhance their influence on postgraduate students. The results showed that increasing regular training and sharing research materials 70 (36.8%) was the most prevalent suggestion, while making scholarly writing training a common unit in the curriculum 60 (31.6%). The students also proposed creating awareness at 20 (10.5%), sensitization of AI tools in the scholarly writing training programs 20 (10.5%). The suggestion to consult with experienced individuals to train postgraduate students was rated at 20 (10.5%). Introducing these practices places universities at a higher likelihood of improvement experiencing postgraduate research quality. These findings agree with Pickton (2016) who asserts that university libraries can play a significant role in training. These two approaches can both serve to train students and increase student awareness.

Results from Librarians

Data collected from the librarians who participated in the study through interviews indicated that their universities had introduced initiatives to train postgraduate students in scholarly writing. 4 (50%) of them reported the presence of regular academic writing training workshops and seminars that inform postgraduate students on various academic writing concepts. 3 (37.5%) librarians reported that they had partnerships with the BPS to have sections assigned for postgraduate training. 1 (12.5%) participant acknowledged orientation as one of the principal approaches to scholarly writing training, involving introducing postgraduate students to research scholarly

after admitted. In so doing, the universities ensure their learners have knowledge and skills necessary for their scholarly work.

The results also indicated that academic writing training is a broad subject with many topics. These topics include access to electronic resources, training on in-text citation and referencing following university guidelines, paraphrasing and summarizing, and information mining skills. However, the participants pointed to the need to revise the training approach to ensure maximum impact on postgraduate students. The main suggestions made included increasing mandatory training for all learners, 3 (37.5%), including training in curriculum, 2 (25%); and training on paragraph and sentence structure, 2 (25%). However, 1 (12.5%) librarian opined that the training modules are perfect and require no changes.

These results indicate that although all the participants appreciate using the training modules on scholarly work, they hold contrasting opinions on their effectiveness, potential improvement, and the need to improve the training programs. The results also indicated that postgraduate students need extra motivation to attend training because most postgraduate students are less likely to participate in academic writing training programs, with only a small percentage demonstrating an interest in the training modules.

Results from Directors of Postgraduate Studies

The responses collected from the directors of postgraduate studies aligned with the findings from postgraduate students and librarians. They reported that scholarly writing training offered in their universities



was effective because most of their students adhered to the academic writing stipulations by their educators. However, they indicated that libraries must increase their collaboration with other faculties to ensure timely training.

The results also demonstrated that the selected universities had introduced several measures to facilitate access to scholarly writing training by postgraduate students, including making the training mandatory, sharing training materials on YouTube and other learning platforms, and ensuring all students accessed the services. Postgraduate Directors of **Studies** acknowledged the three roles they play in academic writing training; namely, seminars. workshops and arranging encouraging supervisors to support the students in improving their research quality, and working closely with faculties and coordinators to assist postgraduate students.

Results from Postgraduate Students, Librarians, and Directors of Postgraduate Studies

Descriptive results from the participants indicated that universities depend on various approaches to advance their students' skills and knowledge in scholarly writing. However, the main practices that prevailed are regular practical training and orientation to introduce postgraduate students to academic writing. findings agree with Adom's (2021) who suggested that scholarly writing training makes students perfect their reading and writing skills through critical strategies like analysis, summarizing synthesis, evaluation of ideas. Using different training approaches, university libraries increase the probability of making all students to understand how to improve their scholarly writing skills. While examining libraries' role in academic writing training, Wang and Qin (2021) asserts that students have different interests in delivering, structuring, and assessing their work. Consequently, following their interests, students use different approaches in academic writing. This situation demonstrates the importance of using multiple training approaches in scholarly writing training.

This study showed existence of training programs that empower students with scholarly writing knowledge in the selected universities. The findings demonstrate that training is highly effective, with one of the main indicators of its efficacy being students' awareness of scholarly writing resources in their institution's library. However, university scholarly writing training has some limitations, including some students not having access to training, lack of training awareness, and traditional training methods.

Nevertheless. the participants demonstrated that technology can be instrumental in overcoming the limitations associated with scholarly writing training programs in their universities. These findings Pickton's (2016)support submission that scholarly writing training can improve library services. Melnychuk et al. (2021) argued that the most crucial aspect of research is the provision of academic resources by university libraries. Therefore, university libraries enable students to access academic resources and train them on their use so as to produce quality research works.



4.0 Conclusion

The study found out that the selected universities have scholarly training programs that aim to curb academic dishonesty among postgraduate students by refining their knowledge and skills in writing. These scholarly approaches include practical training and orientation of new students to academic writing concepts, which aim to improve their effectiveness in postgraduate research.

However, these strategies have weaknesses that limit their effectiveness in mitigating academic dishonesty among postgraduate students. Nevertheless, incorporating Artificial Intelligence (AI) in academic writing training programs, regular training, and creating student awareness could make scholarly writing training programs used by universities more effective. Further, personalization of training which can be achieved through platforms like social

media and student portals, can help reach many students.

5.0 Recommendations

libraries. University director of postgraduate studies, and university departments should make scholarly writing training a regular practice by including this component in the curriculum. They should also include Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the training process to efficiently mitigate academic dishonesty among postgraduate students. Besides, universities should ensure collaboration of all stakeholders, including university departments, directors of postgraduate studies, librarians, and postgraduate students to identify areas that need more emphasis and the best way to achieve scholarly writing skills. Lastly, university libraries should adopt technology in scholarly writing training by incorporating social media platforms and student university portals in training so as to ensure the program reaches many people.

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