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## Awareness of Copyright Infringement Among Undergraduates of The State Universities in Sri Lanka

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## Awareness of Copyright Infringement Among Undergraduates of The State Universities in Sri Lanka

### Cover Page Footnote

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## Awareness of Copyright Infringement Among Undergraduates of The State Universities in Sri Lanka

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### Abstract

Copyright infringement characterized by the unauthorized use of copyrighted material without creators' or authors' consent, constitutes a breach of economic and exclusive rights. This issue is pervasive in higher education institutions in Sri Lanka, manifested through theft, piracy, reuse, and plagiarism among degree-seeking students. This study explores copyright infringement awareness among undergraduates at state universities in Sri Lanka, employing primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through Self-Administered Questionnaires (SAQ) distributed to 356 participants across academic years 2016/2017 to 2019/2020, encompassing general and honors degree programs, selected via Random Sampling Method (RSM). Data analysis, facilitated by SPSS (Version-26), yielded insights presented in tabular format. Results revealed that 58.1% of participants were unaware of copyright infringement as academic dishonesty, as well as the Sri Lankan government-enforced Intellectual Property Act No.36 of 2003, aimed at protecting intellectual property. Additionally, 77.4% acknowledged copyright infringement as a forbidden act within their religions (Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, and Hinduism). Moreover, the main factors that lead to copyright infringement of study samples were a lack of awareness of copyright law (38%), costly textbooks (64.6%), and fear of lower semester grades (77.4%). These findings hold implications for academia, libraries, university administration, and policy-making, prompting proactive measures against future copyright violations. Researchers anticipate that these results will significantly contribute to future investigations in this area.

**Keywords:** Copyright infringement, Copyright Law, Awareness of Copyright Law, Intellectual Property, Undergraduates, Sri Lanka

### Abstrak

*Pelanggaran hak cipta dikenal sebagai penggunaan bahan berhak cipta tanpa izin dari pencipta atau penulis, merupakan pelanggaran terhadap hak ekonomi dan eksklusif. Isu ini meresap di lembaga pendidikan tinggi di Sri Lanka, tampak melalui pencurian, pembajakan, penggunaan ulang, dan plagiarisme di antara mahasiswa yang mengejar gelar. Penelitian ini menggali kesadaran pelanggaran hak cipta di kalangan mahasiswa sarjana di universitas negeri di Sri Lanka, menggunakan data primer dan sekunder. Data primer dikumpulkan melalui Kuesioner yang Diisi Sendiri (SAQ) yang disebar kepada 356 peserta dari tahun akademik 2016/2017 hingga 2019/2020, mencakup program gelar umum dan kehormatan, dipilih melalui Metode Sampling Acak (RSM). Analisis data, difasilitasi oleh SPSS (Versi-26), menghasilkan wawasan yang disajikan dalam format tabel. Hasil mengungkapkan bahwa 58,1% peserta tidak menyadari pelanggaran hak cipta sebagai ketidakjujuran akademis, serta Undang-Undang Hak Kekayaan Intelektual No.36 tahun 2003 yang diberlakukan oleh pemerintah Sri Lanka, yang bertujuan melindungi hak kekayaan intelektual. Selain itu, 77,4% mengakui pelanggaran hak cipta sebagai tindakan terlarang dalam agama mereka (Islam, Buddhisme, Kekristenan, dan Hinduisme). Lebih lanjut, faktor utama yang menyebabkan pelanggaran hak cipta pada sampel penelitian adalah kurangnya kesadaran tentang hukum hak cipta (38%), mahalnya buku teks (64,6%), dan ketakutan mendapatkan nilai semester yang rendah (77,4%). Temuan ini memiliki implikasi bagi dunia akademis, perpustakaan, administrasi universitas, dan pembuatan kebijakan, mendorong langkah proaktif melawan pelanggaran hak cipta di masa depan. Para peneliti mengantisipasi bahwa hasil ini akan berkontribusi secara signifikan pada penyelidikan masa depan dalam bidang ini.*



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**Kata kunci:** *Pelanggaran hak cipta, Hukum Hak Cipta, Kesadaran Hukum Hak Cipta, Kekayaan Intelektual, Sarjana, Sri Lanka*



## I. INTRODUCTION

Intellectual property rights (IPR) are the rights granted for a creative work created by human with his efforts (Lakhan & Khurana, 2008). Intellectual property rights (IPR) according to Saidin (2002) in his book *On the Legal Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights*, IPR are material rights, the Right to an object that comes from the brain's work, the result of proportion Work, the result of the human ratio. The work is within the Objects that are intangible (immaterial) (quoted by Emirzon & Syaifuddin, 2021). Intellectual property has been classified by The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) into five categories such as copyrights, patents, trademarks, designs, and geographical indications (Saujan et al., 2022). Among these copyright denotes towards the right of protection under the law provided to the creators for their literary and artistic works (Akhtar et al., 2020). “Copyright” is a term that defines the exclusive right of the owner over works of art such as books, music, paintings, sculptures, films, computer programs, databases, advertisements, maps and technical images/pictures through which the legal protection is provided to certain creations of writers, artistic and literary creators, and their rights over their creations (Fernando, 2022; Kutni & Murowi, 2022; Situmeang & A, 2021; Tella & Oyeyemi, 2017). Odetunde (2004) defines copyright as “a property that may be sold, assigned, or licensed for use by anyone with an interest in such work” (quoted by Isiakpona & Deborah, 2016). In this regard, copyright may be viewed as a permit granted to others for the proper use of the author's work.

Copyright infringement is misappropriation of the content of the works granted copyright and activities of violating the exclusive right of the owner of the property concerned (Chiang & Assane, 2002; Emirzon & Syaifuddin, 2021; Padil et al., 2020). Piracy (illegal copying), plagiarism, copying by using photocopying machines, duplication of web pages are identified as the main forms of copyright infringement (Isiakpona & Deborah, 2016; Korlety & Tettey, 2015). Further, this violation of rights of the owner of the copyrighted work is also a punishable offence under the Civil and Criminal jurisdiction of a country (Landes & Lichtman, 2003). According to researcher Usman (2010), “copyright infringement is a violation of one of the exclusive rights granted under the law to the owner of the copyrighted work and the use of art and literature in an unauthorized manner without prior permission being obtained.” It is clear from the above statements that copyright infringement is not merely an infraction of an individual's rights, but it may also be a criminal and civil offense punishable under the laws of a country (Pangilinan, 2020). There are no specific definitions of what "copyright awareness" means, however, we define copyright awareness as “being aware of or having knowledge



relating to copyright law and the ways copyright infringement takes place”(Korletey & Tettey, 2015).

The concept of copyright originated in 17th century Britain (Deazley, 2003), more specifically in “the British Statute of Anne of 1710” and “the Statute of Monopolies of 1624”. Through these statutes efforts were made to protect innovations and new creations (Malkawi, 2013). By the 19<sup>th</sup> century which the concept of “Intellectual property Right” had become conventional throughout the world (Malkawi, 2013). The “Act of Anne” was passed by the Parliament of British on 1709 under the name “Copyright Act 1709 8 Anne c.21” and came to in force in 1710 (Deazley, 2003). The short title of the same was known as “Act of Anne” (Deazley, 2003; Norman, 2021). This attempt was considered as the first copyright law enacted in the history of the world (Patry, 2003). Publishers were granted legal protection for a period of 14 years and literature published before the enactment of the Act was granted legal protection for the period of 21 years (Saujan & Nafees, 2022). Moreover, under the said Act, after the expiry of the first period of 14-year, another period of 14 years legal protection was granted if the authors of the works were still alive (Norman, 2021). It is noteworthy that it was introduced in many parts of the British Empire during colonial times and in some countries it has been in force up to date.

In Sri Lanka there was no legal provision for the protection of artistic and literary in pre-colonial times. Sri Lanka was subsequently colonized by the Portuguese (1505- 1658), the Dutch (1658- 1796) and the British (1796- 1948) for a total period of 443 years (Cooray, 2003). During this period there were considerable changes in the field of politics, economy and culture of the country. The influence of Dutch and English laws can still be found in Sri Lankan law. Copyright law in Sri Lanka was introduced by the British (Saujan & Nafees, 2022). During colonial times, copyrights law in Sri Lanka followed the legal changes in the UK, specifically the British inventors Ordinance Act-1859, Patents Ordinance-1906, Trade Marks Ordinance-1888 and Designs Ordinance -1888 are enactments that were also introduced in Sri Lanka (Saujan & Nafees, 2022).

Following independence, the first copyright law of independent Sri Lanka was the Code of Intellectual property Act No. 52 of 1979 which is still in force with minor changes (Wanigasekera, 2015). The Intellectual Property Act No.36 of 2003 was brought and is being implemented up to date. Chapter-I Section-VI of the said Act defines the property for which copyright can be granted as follows:



*“The following works shall be protected as literary, artistic or scientific work (hereinafter referred to as “works”) which are original intellectual creations in the literary, artistic and scientific domain, including and in particular (a)-books, pamphlets, articles, computer programs and other writings. (b) speeches, lectures, addresses, sermons and other oral works. (c)- dramatic, dramatic-musical works, pantomimes, choreographic works and other works created for stage productions. (d)-stage production of works specified in paragraph (c) and expressions of folklore that are apt for such productions. (e)- musical works, with or without accompanying words. (f)- audiovisual works. (g)- works of architecture. (h)- works of drawing, painting, sculpture, engraving, lithography, tapestry and other works of fine art. (j)- photographic works. (k)- works of applied art. (l)- illustrations, maps, plans, sketches and three-dimensional works relative to geography, topography, architecture or science” (Intellectual property Act, 2003).*

When these assets are used without the permission of the copyright holder, it may be regarded as copyright infringement. Moreover, the mentioned Act also clearly explains the fair use of clause as it is available in most of other laws of the world. In addition to these, the law has clearly defined the cases of diversion from source work and has provided protection to them as well:

*“The following shall also be protected as works: (a)- translations, adaptations, arrangements and other transformations or modifications of works; and (b)- collections of works and collections of mere data (data bases), whether in machine readable or other form, provided that such collections are original by reason of the selection, co-ordination or arrangement of their contents.” (Intellectual property Act, 2003).*

In addition, the intellectual property act regulates the legal proceedings against copyright infringement (Wanigasekera, 2015). According to Chapter xxxviii, Section 178 (2) of Intellectual Property Act No. 36 of 2003, the District Court (Magistrate Court) shall take up a case of copyright infringement and, if the offence is established during the trial, the offender shall be liable to a fine not exceeding Five lakh rupees or imprisonment for a term which may not exceed six months, or both.

*"Any person knowing or having reason to believe that copies have been made in infringement of the rights protected under Part II of the Act, sells, displays for sale, or has in his possession for sale or rental or for any other purpose of trade any such copies, shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction by a Magistrate for a fine not exceeding rupees five hundred thousand or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or to both such fine and such imprisonment, and in the case of a second or subsequent conviction, to double the amount of such fine or term of imprisonment or both." (Intellectual property Act, 2003). Considering the severity of the Act, the judge has the authority to double the sentence, considering it a criminal offence (Wanigasekera, 2015).*





The abovementioned section of the Act provides that copyright infringement is punishable offence under the Intellectual Property Act of Sri Lanka.

Our research exclusively focuses on copyrighted works such as books, articles, studies and other works mostly used in the field of higher education. The objective is to examine whether university students in Sri Lanka are aware of copyright law and copyrights infringements. Thus, the study will lead to a better understanding of the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of university students towards copyright issues. The findings of the study could help to inform policy and educational initiatives to improve students understanding of and compliance with copyright law and its implications.

## **II. PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Humanity has progressed in fields such as science, economics, politics, law, medicine and astronomy. Creative works and innovations are emerging in the world day by day. Internationally there is consensus that legal protection should be given to such new inventions. To be able to continue to provide protection under novel circumstances, new national and international laws and amendments are enacted from time to time to follow technical progress. Intellectual Property is created by the human mind and creative thinking. In Sri Lanka, Islamic jurisprudence, international and national laws provide protection to novel creations and inventions.

The fact that copyright violations are prevalent in countries like Malaysia, India, Pakistan and Indonesia compared to “Western” countries of the world is noteworthy (Fernández-Molina et al., 2022; Okiy et al., 2014; Situmeang & A, 2021; Wongchun & Weeks, 2020). Piracy, plagiarism of text, copying by photocopying machines, and duplication of web pages are all intellectual challenges associated with copyright infringement in these countries. These countries have weaker enforcement of copyright laws, which contributes to the issue. Education on the importance of respecting copyright is also lacking, leading to a lack of understanding of the legal implications of infringement (Isiakpona & Deborah, 2016). As a result, these countries have become hotspots for copyright violations.

Sri Lanka is not an exception. Copyright-related violations are common in Sri Lanka and various cases have been registered in the courts. At the same time, anecdotal evidence indicates that many students of schools and universities in Sri Lanka copy literature and publish parts of works created by others under their name, copy from web sites without prior permission of the authors. These acts are punishable offences under international and national laws. Under





Islamic law such acts are also considered as trespass made against others. In Islamic jurisprudence an author's works are considered the property and right of the author, and the protection of knowledge and assets are one of the ultimate goals of Islamic *Shari'ah* (*maqasid al-Shariah*) (Saujan et al., 2022; Saujan & Nafees, 2022).

The record of sins of the theft of materials such as gold lasts until the end of usage but in case of intellectual property sins will be borne by the thief and his descendants according to the teaching of Islam (Saujan et al., 2022). According to the general beliefs and practice, Allah does not forgive the sin made by a human to another one until the person who was affected forgives him (*Hukuk al-Insan*).

### **III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The present study was conducted with the aim of measuring the level of awareness about copyright infringement among the undergraduate students pursuing a degree programme in the state universities in Sri Lanka. The following sub-objectives were put forward by the researchers in order to achieve above mentioned main objective related to awareness of copyright infringement: to examine the perception of study samples about copyright infringement, to identify the main ways by which copyright infringement takes place among the participants, to identify the causes of copyright infringement and to find out the suitable ways to reduce copyright infringement. The following research questions were formulated by the researchers in order to achieve the sub-objectives of the study which are as follows:

**RQ1** - To what extent are students aware about copyright infringement?

**RQ2** - What is the undergraduates' perception of copyright infringement?

**RQ3** - What are the main ways by which copyright infringements occur?

**RQ4** - What are the main factors leading to copyright infringement?

**RQ5** - How can copyright infringement be minimized?

### **IV. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The primary and secondary data have been used in this quantitative study. The Primary data were collected directly from the study - sample through Self-Administered Questionnaire (SAQ). In addition to these the secondary data such as research articles, thesis, proceedings, articles, web-publications, periodicals and magazines have also been used in this study.



## **A. POPULATION**

The data were obtained from the official website of the University Grants Commission (UGC) of Sri Lanka concerning the undergraduate students currently enrolled in state universities in Sri Lanka (2023) in order to determine the population of study. The figures are presented in Table 1.

The total number of students selected for the universities for the academic years 2016/2017, 2017/2018, 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 is 135,599 for the main 7 streams as per the table displayed above, these include students pursuing first-year, second-year, third-year and fourth- year (honors' degree Students). The results of the study represent the students as a whole (135,599).

## **B. SAMPLING**

Based on the Webometrics Sri Lankan ranking universities in July 2022, 12 universities were randomly selected from a total of 15 states universities in Sri Lanka (Ranking, 2023). Those students pursuing studies in general and special (Honors) degrees at these universities voluntarily enrolled in this study. The samples were selected using the population sampling method (PSM) according to the sampling table designed by Darly W. Morgan and Robert V. Krejcie. Therefore, 372 students have participated in this study out of total number of 135,559 students (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970) as follows in Table 2.

## **C. QUESTIONNAIRE**

The questionnaire was designed to be Self-Administered Questionnaire (SAQ) by the study samples reflecting the questions used by Adeyinka Tella, Francia Oyeyemi (2017) those who conducted the research at the Ilorin University in Nigeria under the heading of “Undergraduate students’ knowledge of copyright infringement” with some changes applicable to the context of Sri Lanka. This questionnaire has been designed consisting with two parts. The first part was as of the Socio-Demographic details providers where gender, age, university, field of study and religion were included. The second part was divided into five sub-sections. They are respectively: Perception of the undergraduate students on copyright infringement, way of copyright infringement takes place, factors leading to copyright infringement, copyright infringement from religious view, and ways to reduce the copyright infringement. The sub-



sections have been made intending to represent the sub-objectives of the study and the questions were designed accordingly. The questionnaire was designed including both open-ended and closed-ended questions around 23. The questionnaire was distributed among 372 study samples. Out of which, 356 fully filled questionnaires that were retrieved as usable for research. The details of distributed and received questionnaires are presented in Table 3.

#### **D. DATA ANALYSIS**

All the data collected were subjected to descriptive analysis with the help of software called SPSS (Statistical package for the social Science) version -26. The 94.9% (number - 356) Out of the total questionnaires received during this period, the distributed and received questionnaire ration used in this study is ‘Completion Rate =  $(356/372) \times 100 = 0.9 \times 100 = 95\%$ .’ 95% is seen as the best measure to use in a study, thereby indicating the validity of data obtained from the samples. This is because 95% is seen as a statistically significant amount that can represent the entire population being studied. As such, researchers can be sure that any conclusions drawn from a 95% sample are accurate and reliable. The results obtained are as follows in Table 4.

Majority of the study samples (92.5%) were found in between 21 to 30 years old and 2.4% (9) of the participants were between 31 to 41 years of age due to reason that the educational standards in Sri Lanka are generally based on the age of the students. Most students who read their university education were between the age of 21 and 30. Which has been found when the study samples were analyzed in the basis of gender, out of them the majority (60.8%) were female and 34.1% were male. Since more women are selected than men for universities the gender gap is relatively increased. It was found when the data providers are analyzed on the basis of religion and belief, the majority (44 %) was belonged to Islam, (31.7 %) belong to Buddhism and next to these are the followers of Hinduism and Christianity that represent respectively on proportional basis 16% and 3.2%. When analyzing the fields of study of the study samples, the majority of the study sample (55%) are found as they are from the stream of Arts, (11.6%) from the stream of Bio-systems technology. Relatively, the lowest proportion (19%) belongs to the physical Sciences.

#### **V. RESULTS**

The outcome of the analysis are given below under the separate headings



### **A. The Awareness of The Participants on Copyright Infringement and The Copyright Law of Sri Lanka**

As per the data furnished in the Table 5, the majority of the study sample (58.1%) were found as unfamiliar with the copyright law while a smaller number of participants (38.4m) had some knowledge of the copyright law of Sri Lanka. With regard to the awareness of copyright infringement among the respondents, most of them (56.5%) were unaware of copyright infringements and only 40% of participants were aware of copyright infringements. When the participants were asked about the extent of their awareness of copyright infringement, the majority (38.7%) indicated that they have little of knowledge and 29.1% of the participants indicated that they have some extent of knowledge. Hence, it is significant that most of the samples were not familiar with copyright law as well as were not aware of what constitutes copyright infringement. This indicates there is a need for copyright awareness education among students. In addition to that, copyright holders also need to be aware of their rights and how to protect their work from infringement. Furthermore, there should be more effective measures to ensure copyright compliance.

### **B. Perception of participants on Copyright infringement**

The perception of study samples about copyright infringement was assessed in this subsection. The results are presented in the following table (Table 6).

According to the above table, five questions were placed to the study samples to assess the perception that participants have about copyright infringement. The first question posed was: Do you consider that copyright infringement is a form of intellectual dishonesty? When this question was raised, most of the respondents strongly agreed that copyright infringement is intellectual dishonesty. Additionally, 39.6% respondents agreed with Q1. In short, a majority of the respondents agreed that copyright infringement is a form of intellectual dishonesty, while only 11.8% expressed neutrality, 4.5% disagreed and 1.7% strongly disagreed.

The second question posed was ‘If copyrighted works are to be used for educational purposes, is it necessary to know their authors or copyright holders?’ Most of the respondents (51.4%: 34.3% disagree + 17.1% strongly disagree) stated that it is not necessarily to refer to the authors. Meanwhile, 22.5% of respondents agreed that this is necessary to mention whereas 23.3% respondents were neutral. This indicates that most respondents were ignorant about the



requirement to mention the original authors and that ignorance of copyrights is one of the reasons for the occurrence of copyright infringement.

The third question was whether paraphrasing ideas from existing literature would constitute copyright infringement. A total of 35.7% of respondents agreed and strongly agreed that such activity would constitute copyright infringement. Meanwhile, 42.4% of respondents expressed that this would not constitute copyright infringement. This reveals that most students were not aware that using the ideas of others' works is a violation of copyright law.

The fourth question posed concerned whether the renaming of other author's work and submitting it as their own work would constitute copyright infringement? Most of the respondents (66.3 %) agreed and strongly agreed that such act would constitute a copyright infringement, whereas 20.5 % of respondents stated that such act does not constitute a copyright infringement and an additional 13.2% of respondents were neutral in this regard.

The fifth question concerned whether using copyrighted works without proper citations and references would be a copyright infringement. A total of 43.8% of the respondents considered this a copyright infringement. while 35.9% did not consider it a copyright infringement.

In summary, only a small majority of respondents was aware that copyright infringement is an expression of intellectual dishonesty, that the names of the authors need to be mentioned when using copyrighted works, and that using the works by paraphrasing and renaming other authors' works as one's own is an infringement of copyright, while a small majority was unaware of the necessity to provide proper citations and references when paraphrasing or using ideas from the copyrighted works in their own works such as assignment, research papers, and dissertations.

### **C. The Ways Copyright Infringement Occur**

The ways that copyright infringement take place among the study samples were identified and presented in Table 7.

The Table 7 captures the respondents responses to different ways of copyrights infringements. Most of the respondents (39.8%) admitted using sections of a particular textbook without any changes, while 28.4% of the participants did not and 31.7% were neutral.



As far as concern of the practice of copying ideas verbatim from copyrighted books (Q7), a majority of respondents (49.1%) admitted having practiced such infringement of copyrights, while 28.4% did not and 31.7% were neutral.

About the question on using the wrong citations while writing research articles, dissertations or other works related to academic field, a majority of the respondents (42%) admitted having done so while 38.2% did not and 16% were neutral.

On copying internet sources without the prior permission of the authors and republishing them under their own name, more than 45 % agreed that they have done this, and 28.9% of participants did not, while 21.9% of the study samples have indicated neutrality.

In summary, most of the respondents engage in copyright violation activities such as paraphrasing and using other authors' works, copying the ideas of other writers, incorrect referencing and using internet sources without prior permission.

#### **D. The Factors That Lead to The Involvement of Copyright Infringement**

The factors that led to copyright infringement are presented in the Table 8. According to the table: 3.68 % of respondents stated that copyright infringement take place due to high prices of text books, 50.8% of respondents stated that this was due to the curriculum of the universities, 38% of respondents said that it was due to lack of awareness on the copyright law, while 80% respondents stated that this was due to fear of getting low grades for the university semester exams.

In summary, high prices of text books, the curriculum of the university, lack of copyright awareness, and fear of low marks are major factors that contribute to copyright infringement of the students.

#### **E. The View Of Religion on The Infringement of Copyright**

The survey also explored the religious perspectives of respondents on copyright infringement. The results are presented in the following table (Table 9).

Four questions were raised among the respondents to examine their religious view on copyrights infringement. The first question was ‘Do you agree that your religion strictly prohibits the copyright infringement?’ Most of the respondents (81.4%) “agreed and strongly agreed”, while (3.3%) of respondents disagreed. On the question about whether according to their religion copyright infringement is a violation of individual rights or not, most of the respondents (84.9%) agreed.



The majority of respondents (86.5%) agreed on the question “whether copyright infringement is an act equivalent to stealing another person's physical property (moveable and immovable properties)”, while only 3.4% disagreed. All revealed religion in the world have prohibited theft in general since it is an encroachment on the property belong to someone.

Lastly, when asked whether copyright infringement is a punishable offence according to their religion, a majority of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed (69.7%), while only 10.1% of respondents disagreed. We can conclude that the respondents are aware that according to religious teaching copyright infringement is prohibited practice.

## **F. The Ways to Reduce Copyright Infringement Practices**

The respondents were asked whether they agreed or not to certain methods to prevent students from engaging in copyright infringement. The following table shows the results. The methods proposed could be implemented in State universities in Sri Lanka and educational institutions to help reduce or prevent copyright infringement by students.

The survey (Table 10) proposed five measures to be taken to minimize copyright infringement among the university students. The first measure proposed was programs to increase awareness of students (Q19) to which 93.3% of respondents agreed and strongly agreed, while only 3.1% disagreed. As regards the measure to impose penalties or fines for copyright infringement (Q20) 71.6% of respondents agreed and strongly agreed while 8.5% of respondents disagreed. The third measure proposed in the survey was reducing the prices of textbooks (Q21) to which 78.1% of the participants agreed and strongly agreed while 6.7% of the participants disagreed. The fourth measure proposed was reducing the study burden of the curriculum (Q22), to which 83.1% of respondents agreed, while 3.3% respondents did not agree. Finally, the survey proposed the implementation of software to detect plagiarism and copy-pasting, to which 88.2% respondents agreed, while 3.3% disagreed.

## **VI. HYPOTHESIS TESTING**

The testing of hypothesis has been carried out by the researchers of the study in order to find out the relationship between the samples' academic stream and awareness of the copyright law. the following hypotheses were formulated,

**H<sub>0</sub>**- There is an association between academic stream of respondents and the awareness of copyright law





**H<sub>1</sub>** - There is no association between academic stream of respondents and the awareness of copyright law

The following outcome were obtained after the testing of hypothesis.

The Table 11 is the result obtained after conducting the hypothesis test. The chi-square (pearson Chi-Square) statistic of the study for this table is 261.609 also it has 4 degrees of freedom. Its value with “P” is equal to .000. since the value of P is lesser than 05 in this table, so the H<sub>0</sub> hypothesis of "There is an association between academic stream of research samples and the awareness of copyright law " (H<sub>0</sub>) is rejected, and the hypothesis of "There is no relationship between the learning stream of study samples and the awareness of the copyright law" H<sub>1</sub> is accepted.

Therefore, it can be understood as per this hypothesis test that there is no relationship between the educational background of the samples and the awareness of copyright law in the study area.

## **VII. DISCUSSION**

Copyrights are meant to ensure that the rights of reproduction and exclusive rights of the creator or copyright holder or recognized (Ahmadi & Sonker, 2015). The practice of infringement of copyright in developing countries has attracted the attention of many researchers in the world. Students pursuing higher education especially are found as persons who engage in infringements of copyright more often than other groups. Against this background we conducted this study on copyrights awareness among undergraduate students at state universities in Sri Lanka.

The Intellectual Property Act No. 36 of 2003 in Sri Lanka provides the legal protection to intellectual property such as patents, trademarks, designs, geographical indications and copyrights and provides legal protection to artistic and literary works. Using artistic and literary creations created by others without prior permission constitutes infringement of copyright (Okuy, 2005; Situmeang & A, 2021), meaning that the author concerned has the lawful right to take legal action against such copyright infringement (Fernando, 2022). A lack of awareness may lead to copyright violations such as plagiarism, illegal photocopying (piracy), and copyright infringement (Pangilinan, 2020).

The study found that a large percentage of students at Sri Lankan state universities were ignorant about copyrights law and what constitute copyrights infringements. A large percentage of students admitted they regularly are involved in acts of copyrights infringement.



The main ways by which copyright students did this was by verbatim copying of ideas and sections from books and articles, incorrect or not referencing, and copying of internet content without prior permission or without referencing. Similar practices have been identified in the studies conducted in other parts of the world. For example, Tella & Oyeyemi (2017) found that the main copyright infringements that take place among students at the University of Ilorin in Nigeria are reproduction of literature without the prior permission of the author, distribution of works to third parties, display of copyrighted works in public places and use of copyrighted works as a derivative work. Koretry & Tettey (2015) in a study on copyrights infringements by students at Kwame Nkrumah University in Ghana, identified that the main copyright infringement took place through copying texts from websites and reproducing them under their own names without proper referencing.

In our study the majority of respondents agreed that the main factors leading to copyright infringement are a lack of awareness about copyright law, the high costs of textbooks and fear of getting low grades. Similar factors have been identified in studies conducted in other developing countries. Tella & Oyeyemi (2017) identify lack of awareness about the copyright law and the high price of textbooks as the main factors for infringement of copyrights at Nigerian universities, as well as the scarcity of literature and the fear of getting low grades. Similarly, Igudia & Hamzat (2016) identified high cost of textbooks, lack of awareness about the basics of plagiarism and referencing and lack of understanding of copyrights law as factors leading to copyrights infringements among Nigerian students as well as carelessness of the students, workload, accessibility of academic related literature, and the influence of online media. Additionally, Korletey & Tettey (2015) mention for the case of Ghana that lack of effective legislation, lack of rules for protecting and monitoring copyrights infringements and the lack of efforts by educational institutions to teach and enforce copyrights law. These cases illustrate that while copyrights are generally legally protected and violators are liable for the imposition of penalties under the copyright laws of developing countries, copyrights infringements are still widespread.

In contrast, Lisa Di Valantino (2015) found in a study on Canadian university students that most of the respondents, abided to copyrights law. Students at the studied Canadian universities appeared to be well aware of copyright law and academic rules & regulations concerning referencing and the use of works of others. One of the explanations provided in the study for this compliance is that all students in Canada receive training and workshops to make students aware of how to use copyrighted materials in their own works. In line with this, Tella



& Oyeyemi (2017), argue that copyright infringement in Nigeria can only be prevented through awareness campaigns and university policies (Tella & Oyeyemi, 2017). A similar argument was presented by Ahmadi & Sonker (2015) for the case of India: copyright infringement can only be minimized by providing proper awareness to students and the public on the consequences of copyrights law and how to use copyrighted works properly. Hence, we argue that in the case of Sri Lanka it is essential to create awareness among students about copyrights law to prevent infringements.

The respondents (all students at Sri Lankan state universities) in our study agreed to the proposed measure to creating awareness among students on copyrights law and copyrights infringements. They also in large majority agreed to the proposed imposition of other measures: taking legal action against those who involve in the copyright infringement, reducing the prices of textbooks, simplifying the university curriculum, and facilitating the use of the software on plagiarism detection by students. The proposed measures against copyrights in our study were based on literature on copyrights compliance in developing countries. For instance, Tella & Oyeyemi (2017) suggest that copyright infringement can be minimized by reducing the prices of textbooks, creating awareness on the copyright law, taking strict legal action against those involved in copyright infringements and improving libraries so that students can use them quickly and easily and have better access to literature. In addition, Igudia & Hamzath (2016) suggest incorporating copyrights awareness and proper referencing into the curriculum, whereas Hazlina et. al (2020) underlined that copyrights infringements can only be minimized through enforcement of protection laws related to copyright.

In short, to overcome copyrights infringements by students, the task for universities is to provide training on copyrights, providing sufficient access to materials and literature, and enforce copyrights law and referencing policies at the universities.

## **VIII. CONCLUSION**

Infringement of copyrights by students is an act of dishonesty in relation to academic activities. Our study had the objective to examine the awareness of copyright infringement among students at Sri Lankan state universities. We found that a substantial percentage of respondents in our survey lacked sufficient awareness of copyrights law and copyrights infringements and admitted to regularly infringe copyrights law. Students admitted to paraphrasing and using the ideas of other authors, renaming and using creation of other people as their own and not properly referencing when using works of others. We found through



hypothesis testing that there is no correlation between awareness and the academic program students were enrolled in.

Despite their partaking in copyrights infringements, a majority of respondents agreed that copyrights infringement is an expression of intellectual dishonesty which is prohibited according to their religion. The study found that students are mostly not aware of what exactly falls under copyrights infringement and what not. A large majority of students agreed to proposed measures that would prevent students from copyright infringement and reduce violations in the future, namely programs to make students aware of copyright laws, imposing penalties on infringements, reducing prices of textbook, and making arrangements for students to use the software that can detect plagiarism.

Failure to take such steps will have adverse consequences, especially now online sources are readily available to students. Without proper measures, the quality of future graduates may drop, which will have nation-wide effects on research and academia. We hope that the findings of our study will contribute to a sense of urgency among policy makers in the field of education as well as the University Grants Commission in Sri Lanka, university academics, and undergraduate students about the importance of proper use of copyrighted works in academia.



## Data & Tables

*Table 1 Data Sources: web site of University Grant Commission “Sri Lanka University Statistics”*

No	Stream	Academic Year			
		2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020
01	Arts	9,418	9,923	10,400	12,009
02	Commerce	5,793	6,179	6,020	7,807
03	Physical Science	6,023	5,787	5,707	7,874
04	Biological Science	7,032	6,889	7,014	9,805
05	Engineering Technology	1,215	1,309	1,361	2,095
06	Biosystems Technology	857	958	994	1,506
07	Law & Other Streams	324	370	385	545
	Total	30,662	31,415	31,881	41,641
	<b>Population</b>		<b>135,599</b>		

*Table 2: Webometrics Sri Lankan ranking universities in July 2022*

No	Name of the University	Study Sample
01	University of Colombo (UC)	25
02	South Eastern University of Sri Lanka (SEUSL)	142
03	Eastern University, Sri Lanka (EUS)	30
04	University of Jaffna (UJ)	17
05	University of Kelaniya (UK)	27
06	University of Moratuwa (UM)	11
07	Rajarata University of Sri Lanka (RUS)	24
08	University of Sri Jayewardenepura (USJ)	11
09	University of Peradeniya (UP)	43
10	University of Ruhuna (UR)	11
11	Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka (SUS)	10
12	Uva Wellassa University of Sri Lanka (UWUS)	05
	Total sample	356

*Table 3: Questionnaire distributed manner*

No	Name of the University	Distributed Questionnaires	Received Questionnaires
01	University of Colombo	27	25
02	South Eastern University of Sri Lanka	144	142
03	Eastern University, Sri Lanka	30	30
04	University of Jaffna	18	17
05	University of Kelaniya	28	27
06	University of Moratuwa	11	11
07	Rajarata University of Sri Lanka	24	24



08	University of Sri Jayewardenepura	14	11
09	University of Peradeniya	45	43
10	University of Ruhuna	12	11
11	Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka	12	10
12	Uva Wellassa University of Sri Lanka	07	05
<b>Total sample</b>		<b>372</b>	<b>356</b>

Table 4: Socio-Demographic Details of Samples

Details of the Study sample	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Age</b>		
▪ 21-30	347	92.5%
▪ 31-41	9	2.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>94.9%</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
▪ Male	130	34.1%
▪ Female	226	60.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>94.9%</b>
<b>Religion</b>		
▪ Buddhism	119	31.7%
▪ Islam	165	44%
▪ Hinduism	60	16%
▪ Christianity	12	3.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>94.9%</b>
<b>University</b>		
▪ University of Colombo	25	6.7%
▪ South Eastern University of Sri Lanka	142	37.9%
▪ Eastern University, Sri Lanka	30	8.0%
▪ University of Jaffna	17	4.5%
▪ University of Kelaniya;	27	7.2%
▪ University of Moratuwa	11	2.9%
▪ Rajarata University of Sri Lanka	24	6.4%
▪ University of Sri Jayewardenepura	11	2.9%
▪ University of Peradeniya	43	11.5%
▪ University of Ruhuna	11	2.9%
▪ Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka	10	2.7%
▪ Uva Wellassa University of Sri Lanka	5	1.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>94.9%</b>
<b>Stream</b>		
▪ Arts	206	55%
▪ Law	29	7.5%
▪ Commers	36	9.5%
▪ Biological Science	19	5.2%
▪ Physical Science	24	6.1%
▪ Engineering Technology	42	11.6%
▪ Biosystems Technology		
<b>Total</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>94.9%</b>



Table 5 Awareness of The Participants On Copyright Infringement and The Copyright Law

Questions	Frequency	Percentage
Have you known about the copyright law?		
Yes	144	38.4%
No	212	56.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>94.9%</b>
Are you aware of copyright infringement?		
Yes	150	40%
No	206	54.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>94.9%</b>
How far you have the knowledge of copyright infringement?		
Great Extent	17	4.5%
Some Extent	109	29.1%
Little Extent	139	37%
No Extent	91	24.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>94.9%</b>

Table 6: Perception of participants on Copyright infringement, Sources of Data from Questionnaire

Factors (Questions)	Valid												Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation
	Strongly Agree		Strongly Agree		Neither Agree or Disagree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Non- valid					
	F	%	f	%	f	%	F	%	F	%	f	%				
<b>Section-I: Perception of participants on Copyright infringement</b>																
Q1	151	42.4	141	39.6	42	11.8	16	4.5	6	1.7	0	0	4.17	4.00	5	0.921
Q2	24	6.7	66	18.5	83	23.3	122	34.3	61	17.1	0	0	2.63	2.00	2	1.163
Q3	43	12.1	84	23.6	78	21.9	109	30.6	42	11.8	0	0	2.94	3.00	2	1.224
Q4	30	8.4	43	12.1	47	13.2	60	16.9	176	49.4	0	0	2.13	2.00	1	1.362
Q5	36	10.1	92	25.8	72	20.2	78	21.9	78	21.9	0	0	2.80	3.00	4	1.313





Table 7: Ways that copyright infringement may occur

Factors (Questions)	Valid												Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation
	Strongly Agree		Strongly Agree		Neither Agree or Disagree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Non- valid					
	F	%	f	%	f	%	F	%	F	%	f	%				
<b>Section- II: Ways that copyright infringement may occur</b>																
<b>Q6</b>	50	14	92	25.8	113	31.7	68	19.1	33	9.3	0	0	3.16	3.00	3	1.166
<b>Q7</b>	66	18.5	109	30.6	78	21.9	48	13.5	55	15.4	0	0	3.23	3.00	4	1.323
<b>Q8</b>	52	14.6	107	30.1	60	16.9	52	14.6	85	23.9	0	0	2.97	3.00	4	1.411
<b>Q9</b>	78	21.9	90	25.3	36	10.1	36	10.1	116	32.6	0	0	2.94	3.00	1	1.593

Table 8: Factors Lead to the copyright infringement, Sources of Data from Questionnaire

Factors (Questions)	Valid												Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation
	Strongly Agree		Strongly Agree		Neither Agree or Disagree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Non- valid					
	F	%	f	%	f	%	F	%	F	%	f	%				
<b>Section- III: Factors Lead to the copyright infringement</b>																
<b>Q10</b>	109	30.6	133	37.4	78	21.9	30	8.4	6	1.7	0	0	3.87	4.00	4	1.000
<b>Q11</b>	84	23.6	97	27.2	139	39	30	8.4	6	1.7	0	0	3.63	4.00	3	0.989
<b>Q12</b>	69	19.4	69	19.4	164	46.1	48	13.5	6	1.7	0	0	3.41	3.00	3	1.002
<b>Q13</b>	145	40.7	145	40.7	56	15.7	6	1.7	4	1.1	0	0	4.18	4.00	4	0.838
<b>Q14</b>	36	10.1	60	16.9	97	27.2	54	15.2	109	30.6	0	0	2.61	3.00	1	1.342



*Table 9: Religious view on Copyright infringement, Sources of Data from Questionnaire*

Factors (Questions)	Valid												Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation
	Strongly Agree		Strongly Agree		Neither Agree or Disagree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Non- valid					
	F	%	f	%	f	%	F	%	F	%	f	%				
<b>Section-IV: Religious view on Copyright infringement</b>																
<b>Q15</b>	187	52.5	103	28.9	54	15.2	4	1.1	8	2.2	0	0	4.28	5.00	5	0.920
<b>Q16</b>	175	49.2	127	35.7	42	11.8	8	2.2	4	1.1	0	0	4.29	4.00	5	0.846
<b>Q17</b>	193	54.2	115	32.3	36	10.1	6	1.7	6	1.7	0	0	4.36	5.00	5	0.859
<b>Q18</b>	133	37.4	115	32.3	72	20.2	12	3.4	24	6.7	0	0	3.90	4.00	5	1.145

*Table 10: ways to reduce the copyright infringement, Sources of Data from Questionnaire*

Factors (Questions)	Valid												Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation
	Strongly Agree		Strongly Agree		Neither Agree or Disagree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Non- valid					
	F	%	f	%	f	%	F	%	F	%	f	%				
<b>Section- V: ways to reduce the copyright infringement</b>																
<b>Q19</b>	259	72.8	73	20.5	13	3.7	0	0	11	3.1	0	0	4.60	5.00	5	0.828
<b>Q20</b>	109	30.9	145	40.7	72	20.2	18	5.1	12	3.4	0	0	3.90	4.00	4	1.004
<b>Q21</b>	176	49.4	102	28.7	54	15.2	16	4.5	8	2.2	0	0	4.19	4.00	5	0.998
<b>Q22</b>	193	54.2	103	28.9	48	13.5	4	1.1	8	2.2	0	0	4.32	5.00	5	0.9.9
<b>Q23</b>	151	42.4	163	45.8	30	8.4	4	1.1	8	2.2	0	0	4.25	4.00	4	0.834



*Table 11: Chi Square Test*

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	261.609 <sup>a</sup>	10	.000
Likelihood Ratio	331.284	10	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	168.616	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	356		

a. 8 cells (36.4%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .81.



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## ANNEX

### (Research Questions)

#### **Section-I: Perception of participants on Copyright infringement**

Q1 – I see the copyright infringement as a form of intellectual dishonesty

Q2 – I consider it unnecessary to know the authors of the works when using copyrighted works for the purpose of education

Q3 – Paraphrasing of literature does not constitute a violation of copyright law

Q4 – Passing off another person's literary work as my own will not be considered as a copyright infringement

Q5 – Presenting ideas without proper citation and references does not mean I am violating copyright law

#### **Section- II: Ways of copyright infringement is occurred**

Q6 - I paraphrase the ideas of a particular textbook and use it

Q7 - I copy the word to the word from a particular textbook

Q8 - I post the false citation

Q9 - I publish recycling the works from the internet work by my name without the permission of the Authors

#### **Section- III: Factors Lead to the copyright infringement**

Q10 - High price of text books

Q11 - Syllabus of the Universities

Q12 - Lack of awareness of copyright law

Q13 - Fear of obtaining poor grads

Q14 - Willingness on violating laws

#### **Section-IV: Religious view on Copyright infringement**

Q15 - My religion strongly prohibits the infringement of copy right

Q16 - In my religion the infringement of copy right is a violation of the right of an individual.

Q17 - The infringement of copyright is an equal offence of stealing physical property.

Q18 - The infringement of copy right is a punishable offence in my religion

#### **Section- V: ways to reduce the copyright infringement**

Q19 - Providing the fullest awareness to students

Q20 - Imposing penalty against who engorging in copyright infringement

Q21 - Make a reduction in the price of textbook





**Q22** - Taking action to minimize the burden of the university syllabus

**Q23** - Making arrangements at university level for students to operate plagiarism detection software



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