



Beyond the Similarity Score: A Phenomenological Case Study of Faculty Perspectives on Turnitin Plagiarism Detection Software at Landmark University, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated faculty awareness, perceptions, and lived experiences with Turnitin plagiarism detection software at Landmark University, Nigeria. It aimed to assess understanding of the tool, evaluate its perceived role in promoting academic integrity, explore practical use in teaching and research, and identify associated benefits and challenges. A phenomenological approach was employed. Data were collected through structured online interviews with 25 faculty members (heads of department) purposively selected for their active use of Turnitin plagiarism detection software. Narrative analysis was used to identify key themes from the transcribed responses. Findings revealed a gap between operational awareness and pedagogical understanding of Turnitin. Faculty perceived a tension between its value as a formative educational tool and its institutional deployment as a summative, punitive mechanism. Lived experiences highlighted its role in standardising output and providing objective evidence, but also cited significant procedural burden and interpretive challenges. Key benefits included safeguarding institutional credibility and empowering faculty, while major challenges involved infrastructure, contextual interpretation of reports, and the emerging threat of generative AI. The study concludes that while Turnitin is successfully institutionalised as a compliance mechanism at Landmark University, its potential as a catalyst for a deeper academic integrity culture remains under-realised. To bridge this gap, a strategic shift from a policy-focused to a pedagogy-centered implementation is required. This involves investing in advanced faculty training, reframing institutional messaging, ensuring reliable infrastructure, and proactively developing strategies to address AI-assisted plagiarism. The study contributes theoretically by validating the integrated examination of awareness, perception, and lived experience as inseparable determinants of technology adoption in non-Western academic contexts, and practically by providing an evidence-based framework for transitioning from compliance-oriented to pedagogy-centered integrity infrastructure in Global South universities.



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1. Introduction

Clearly, the credibility of academic scholarship is fundamentally anchored in the principle of originality. In the digital age, however, the tools that democratise access to information also facilitate its misappropriation, making plagiarism a critical global threat to academic integrity (Kampa et al., 2025; Sozon et al., 2024; Kayode et al., 2020). Universities worldwide have responded by adopting technological solutions, with Turnitin emerging as the most widely used text-matching software (Nketsiah et al., 2024). Yet a persistent oversight in both policy and research has been the assumption that the presence of detection technology equates to its effective and pedagogically sound use. The true determinant of success lies not in algorithmic sophistication but in the human factors governing adoption: the awareness, perceptions, and lived experiences of faculty mandated to use these tools (Aboyade et al., 2025; Tella et al., 2020).

Awareness encompasses the cognitive ability to recognise, understand, and evaluate a phenomenon, including the competencies and techniques required for effective operation (Aboyade et al., 2025; Nketsiah et al., 2024). Perception involves the process of identifying, organising, and interpreting information, which directly influences judgment and action (Augustine and Opara, 2025; Kalicharan and Butler, 2025). Lived experience refers to the accumulated knowledge and practical skill gained through direct personal participation in a specific activity or profession (Collins Dictionary, 2025). Together, these constructs shape how faculty engage with Turnitin, determining whether it is viewed as supportive, punitive, or effective in fostering academic integrity.

Current literature reveals a significant geographical and contextual imbalance. While studies from Western institutions examine Turnitin within frameworks of well-resourced support systems and established academic integrity cultures, there is a profound dearth of empirical research within the unique ecosystems of Sub-Saharan African higher education (Aboyade et al., 2025; Nketsiah et al., 2024; Eromosele & Kayode 2025). This gap is consequential: policies and training models are being transposed without understanding how infrastructural constraints, varying cultural conceptions of authorship, and levels of institutional support mediate user engagement. In Nigeria, where universities vigorously strive to meet international scholarly standards, this lack of context-specific evidence represents a major challenge to developing sustainable integrity programmes.

Empirical studies confirm that infrastructural instability, limited training, and sociocultural mismatches in authorship norms fundamentally complicate plagiarism detection software adoption in African universities (Aboyade et al., 2025; Nketsiah et al., 2024). Faculty report that interpreting similarity reports is time-intensive, internet access unreliable, and cultural conceptions of textual borrowing at odds with Western citation conventions. More recently, the rise of AI-assisted writing has introduced new uncertainties, testing the limits of detection algorithms and raising fundamental questions about the future of originality in academic work (Originality.AI, 2025).

Within this national context, this study addresses a significant lacuna by focusing on Landmark University, a top-ranked Nigerian institution with a compulsory Turnitin policy for all published articles and graduate submissions (Times Higher Education, 2026). By investigating awareness levels, perceptual attitudes, and lived experiences of faculty, this research moves beyond simplistic evaluation of software functionality to uncover the nuanced realities determining whether Turnitin functions as a genuine catalyst for academic integrity or merely as a procedural hurdle. The study contributes theoretically by validating the integrated examination of awareness, perception, and lived experience as inseparable determinants of technology adoption in non-Western academic contexts, and practically by providing an evidence-based framework for

transitioning from compliance-oriented to pedagogy-centered integrity infrastructure in Global South universities.

Building on the foregoing discussion, this study seeks to examine the human factors that shape the effectiveness of Turnitin at Landmark University. Specifically, it aims to assess faculty members' awareness of Turnitin, examine their perceptions of its role in promoting academic integrity, and explore their lived experiences of using the software in academic writing and research. The study also evaluates the perceived benefits of Turnitin within the university and identifies the challenges faculty members have encountered, currently encounter, and may continue to encounter when using the software. Through these objectives, the study provides a holistic understanding of whether compulsory Turnitin use operates as a meaningful academic-integrity support mechanism or merely as a procedural requirement.

Despite the extensive international literature on Turnitin's effectiveness and adoption, empirical studies remain concentrated largely in Western and well-resourced institutional contexts. This leaves limited evidence on how awareness, perceptions, and lived experiences jointly influence the use of Turnitin in Sub-Saharan African universities, where infrastructural limitations, local conceptions of authorship, institutional support, and emerging AI-assisted writing may shape faculty engagement differently. In Nigeria, few institutional-level studies have examined these three interconnected constructs within a university that mandates Turnitin for graduate submissions and scholarly publications. Existing research also tends to investigate such factors separately, limiting its capacity to offer context-sensitive and practical recommendations. Therefore, this study addresses this geographical, contextual, and integrative gap by investigating faculty members' awareness, perceptions, and lived experiences of Turnitin at Landmark University, Nigeria.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Turnitin Plagiarism Detection Text-Matching Software and Landmark University

Turnitin is a widely used text-matching and plagiarism detection software developed by iParadigms, LLC. Initially launched in 1997, it was among the first digital tools designed to assist educators in identifying potential academic dishonesty by comparing student submissions against a vast database of academic works, websites, and publications (Sajid, et al., 2025; Bashir 2025). Over the years, Turnitin has evolved from a simple plagiarism checker into an integrated platform offering features such as GradeMark, PeerMark, and Originality, which support grading, peer review, and integrity analytics (Turnitin, 2023).

Scholars from different parts of the world have conceptualised Turnitin plagiarism detection text-matching software in different ways. For example, Turnitin plagiarism detection text-matching software refer to one of the most widely used text matching systems in higher education, designed to promote academic integrity by comparing student submissions against extensive databases of published works, web content, and prior student papers (Odongo et al., 2025). Its similarity reports highlight matched text for instructor review rather than making automated plagiarism judgments, thereby supporting both detection and pedagogy (Mulenga and Shilongo 2024). Studies have shown that institutions adopting Turnitin often report reductions in plagiarism, detection particularly in entry level courses, due to its deterrent effect and the transparency it brings to academic writing practices (Turnitin, 2025).

Taking cognisance of these definitions, it is understood that beyond detection, Turnitin has been increasingly employed as a formative tool (Abalkina 2025). When faculty and students are allowed to review similarity reports before final submission, they gain opportunities to correct citation errors, improve paraphrasing, and develop stronger academic writing skills (Turnitin, 2025). This iterative use positions Turnitin not only as a policing mechanism but also as a teaching aid that fosters ethical scholarship. However, limitations and challenges remain: similarity scores can be inflated by common phrases, correctly cited quotations, or methodological boilerplate, underscoring the need for careful interpretation (Milovanovic et al., 2025; Wulandari et al., 2025; Rahman et al., 2025).

Based on the foregoing discussion, recent scholarship highlights emerging challenges in the era of generative AI. As faculty and students experiment with tools like ChatGPT, Sider, copilot, questions arise about Turnitin's ability to detect paraphrased or AI generated text. Researchers call for more cross cultural and multilingual studies to assess the tool's effectiveness globally, as well as clearer guidance on calibrating similarity thresholds across disciplines (Originality.AI, 2025). These gaps suggest that while Turnitin remains central to academic integrity strategies, further research is needed to adapt its role to evolving technologies and diverse educational contexts.

Drawing from the aforementioned definitions and gaps, one can see that Turnitin is more than just a plagiarism checker (Nuhtrat 2025). It's a pedagogical tool that aids in teaching proper research methods, writing practices, and the ethical use of information (Obeng-Ofori and Adaobi, 2025). Turnitin is primarily known as a plagiarism detection tool that aids in maintaining academic integrity by checking students' submissions against a vast database of sources. The main aim of Turnitin is to prevent students from committing plagiarism, a serious academic offence (Nuhtrat 2025; Wulandari et al., 2025). It also encourages students to develop original thinking and writing habits while providing instructors and teachers with a tool to detect and discourage plagiarism. In addition to that, Turnitin Originality Check is a service tailored for students who want to check the originality of their work before submitting it to their instructors. By connecting to a vast repository of academic writings such as the ProQuest Central, the General Content and the Web Content that are indexed by Turnitin's web crawlers, Turnitin can generate an Originality Report that assists a student in identifying text matches against the currently crawled sources (Murch et al., 2025; Nketsiah et al., 2023; Obeng-Ofori and Adaobi, 2025).

2.2. Faculty awareness of Turnitin Plagiarism Detection Text-Matching Software at Landmark University

Research indicates considerable variation in faculty awareness of Turnitin's capabilities beyond basic plagiarism detection. While most academics recognise its primary function of generating similarity reports, awareness of its pedagogical potential for formative feedback remains limited (Murch et al., 2025). Faculty and student in developed educational systems demonstrate higher familiarity with Turnitin's features compared to counterparts in developing regions, where institutional support and training are often inadequate (Obeng-Ofori and Adaobi, 2025). Several studies highlight that faculty and student awareness correlates strongly with institutional training initiatives. Abalkina (2025) found that targeted training programs significantly increased faculty understanding of Turnitin's originality reports and ability to interpret results accurately. However, many institutions implement Turnitin without accompanying professional development, leading to inconsistent application and interpretation across departments (Nketsiah et al., 2023).

Faculty attitudes toward Turnitin also vary considerably. Some view it primarily as a deterrent and detection tool, while others recognise its potential for teaching proper citation practices and writing skills (Nketsiah et al., 2023). This divergence reflects deeper philosophical differences about whether plagiarism prevention should emphasise punitive measures or educational approaches. Faculty and post-graduate student awareness of Turnitin has increased substantially with its widespread adoption, though understanding of its mechanisms remains superficial for many. Brickhill et al., (2025) found that while 89% of students in their Australian study knew their institution used Turnitin, only 62% could accurately describe how it worked. This gap between awareness and understanding is significant because students who misunderstand Turnitin's functionality may develop ineffective strategies to circumvent detection. International students and those from educational systems with different norms regarding textual borrowing often exhibit lower awareness of how Turnitin interprets plagiarism in Western academic contexts Nuhtrat, (2025). This highlights the need for culturally responsive instruction when implementing text-matching software in diverse student populations. Interestingly, student awareness of Turnitin doesn't necessarily correlate with reduced plagiarism. Lopes et al., (2025) found that while awareness was high, actual plagiarism rates remained unchanged without complementary educational interventions. This suggests that mere knowledge of detection software is insufficient to change behavior, supporting the need for comprehensive academic integrity education.

In their study, Aboyade et al., (2025), examined the awareness and utilisation of plagiarism checkers among undergraduate students in universities in Kogi State. 295 final-year

undergraduate students from Federal University in Lokoja, Kogi State, and Prince Abubakar Audu University in Anyigba made up the research population. A systematic questionnaire was used to gather data, and a multistage sample strategy was used. The results show that there is a large disparity in the voluntary usage of plagiarism checkers, despite the fact that students are typically aware of plagiarism detection programs and understand the repercussions of breaking plagiarism policies. Many students do not actively utilise plagiarism detection software, even though it is readily available and institutional regulations encourage its usage. The report also reveals a significant difference in the frequency of plagiarism checks between students at federal and state universities.

This implies that the degree of student involvement in plagiarism prevention initiatives may be influenced by institutional variables, such as policy enforcement, teacher engagement, and availability to plagiarism detection software. The study suggests that in order to improve students' comprehension of plagiarism, its repercussions, and the significance of plagiarism detection techniques, the National Institutions Commission (NUC) and other regulatory agencies should establish extensive training programs at all institutions. Furthermore, it promotes focused interventions in state universities to encourage a more organised and proactive response to students' use of plagiarism checkers, guaranteeing consistent enforcement of academic integrity standards throughout all institutions.

2.3. Faculty Perceptions of Turnitin Plagiarism Detection Text-Matching Software as a Tool for Promoting Academic Integrity

Conversely, perception is the collection of mechanisms by which a person recognizes and analyzes information about their surroundings. Perception is defined by [Si et al. \(2026\)](#) as the identification and interpretation of sensory data. It is the process by which we absorb sensory data from our surroundings and utilize it to engage with them. We are able to transform sensory data into something meaningful through perception. It may be inferred from the contribution of [Si et al. \(2026\)](#) that perception is the way we perceive or comprehend the world. Therefore, it is crucial to comprehend how academicians see the usage of Turnitin software for plagiarism detection since, despite its many advantages, reality may differ from their viewpoint.

Research done by [Nketsiah, et al., \(2024\)](#) Postgraduate students' perception of plagiarism, awareness, and use of Turnitin text-matching software. An online Google form was utilised to gather data for this investigation. We enrolled 1054 University of Cape Coast postgraduate students. SPSS version 21.0 was used to analyse the data, and structural equation modeling was used to test the hypothesis. The results indicate that there was no statistically significant correlation between postgraduate students' perceptions of plagiarism and their academic standing. Nonetheless, there is a strong correlation between postgraduate students' usage of Turnitin and their sense of plagiarism. Additionally, there is a statistically significant correlation between Turnitin knowledge and usage among postgraduate students. This necessitates more awareness-raising and sensitisation, which may be achieved through scientific writing workshops aimed at instilling in students ethical research procedures.

In their study, [Augustine & Opara \(2025\)](#) examined master's students' perception of plagiarism during research writing in the faculty of education. At a significance level of 0.05, this study addressed and assessed six hypotheses and four research topics. The University of Port Harcourt (UPH) and Imo State University (IMSU) were employed in the study. Stratified random sampling was used to choose a sample size of 95 individuals from a population of 276 master's students using a descriptive survey approach. With a reliability rating of 0.85, the instrument was a 37-item survey on plagiarism and ethical concerns in the faculty of education. The statistical software for social sciences was used to evaluate the data using t-tests, mean, standard deviation, and percentage. The findings demonstrated that master's students in the education faculty at IMSU and UPH have favorable opinions of the ethical guidelines controlling people's use of their work while writing theses; the perceptions varied considerably by gender but were negligible by institution. Regardless of gender or institution, there was a high level of knowledge of the penalties of plagiarism. Both male and female students in the department of education at both institutions are able to rewrite cited resources in their theses using online paraphrasing tools without having to pay someone to do it. According to the results, female students are more likely than male students to commit plagiarism. Among other things, postgraduate instructors were

advised to stress the need of male and female students rigorously adhering to the ethical guidelines governing authors' use of intellectual property.

2.5. *The Live Experience Of Faculty with the Use of Turnitin Plagiarism Detection Text-Matching Software in Academic Writing and Research*

The integration of Turnitin plagiarism detection software into academic ecosystems has transcended mere technological adoption, becoming a lived experience that fundamentally shapes academic practices, relationships, and identities. A significant divide exists in faculty experiences based on how they integrate Turnitin into their teaching philosophy. Research by [Dawson and Sutherland \(2024\)](#) distinguishes between "formative integrators" and "summative validators." Formative integrators, approximately 40% of faculty in their multinational study, experience Turnitin as a valuable teaching tool. They report using originality reports in one-on-one writing conferences, designing assignments around iterative submission processes, and appreciating how visual similarity data helps students understand citation practices concretely ([Alzahrani & Salama, 2023](#)).

Conversely, summative validators view Turnitin primarily as an administrative requirement or quality-assurance checkpoint. These faculty members, particularly in STEM fields where writing constitutes a smaller portion of assessment, often experience the software as an external imposition that adds bureaucratic burden without clear pedagogical benefit ([Wong & Lim, 2023](#)). Interestingly, [Park \(2024\)](#) notes that even faculty who value Turnitin pedagogically express concern about its algorithmic limitations, particularly in identifying sophisticated plagiarism like contract cheating or accurately distinguishing between properly cited sources and problematic paraphrasing.

2.5. *The benefits of Turnitin plagiarism Detection Text-Matching Software within Landmark University*

Recent studies emphasise Turnitin plagiarism detection text-matching software role as a formative rather than solely punitive tool. When used iteratively, the software provides faculty and students with actionable feedback that enhances their academic writing skills. [Alzahrani and Salama \(2023\)](#) found that faculty and students who engaged in multiple Turnitin submissions with instructor guidance showed significant improvement in paraphrasing, source integration, and citation accuracy. The visual nature of the Originality Report, highlighting matched text, serves as a concrete learning aid, making abstract concepts of plagiarism more tangible for learners ([Wulandari et al., 2025](#)).

As [Jolayemi et al., \(2024\)](#) examined the facilitating conditions and the use of plagiarism detection software by postgraduates of the university of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Therefore, this study looked at the usage of plagiarism detection software and enabling circumstances among postgraduate students at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria. With a population of 2143 postgraduates, this study employed a descriptive survey research design of the correlational type. The sample size of 242 was determined using the multi-stage random sampling procedure. The research tool was the questionnaire, and descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data. According to the findings, the majority of postgraduates concurred that the institution offered helpful resources including internet access.

Most of the participants reported using Turnitin on a monthly basis. The majority of responders stated that they checked the grammar in their writings and paraphrased their work using plagiarism detection tools. For the majority of responders, the biggest obstacles to using plagiarism detection software were sluggish internet access and their inability to pay the monthly fee. Facilitating circumstances and the usage of plagiarism detection software by postgraduate students at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, were significantly positively correlated. Among the recommendations made to the management of the institution are making use of the extensive network of former students who are eager to support the school and acting to provide energy and Internet access.

2.6. *The Challenges Faculty Encountered, are Encountering, and will be Encountering in Using Turnitin Plagiarism Detection Text-Matching Software at Landmark University*

Rama, (2024) examined the feasibility of UGC's plagiarism guidelines: challenges and opportunities in popular plagiarism prevention tools. The paper undertakes a comprehensive examination of the potential benefits and challenges associated with incorporating the University Grants Commission's (UGC) plagiarism guidelines into the most commonly employed plagiarism detection tools in Indian universities and educational institutions. The central focus of the study is to evaluate the feasibility of adjusting these tools to exclude certain categories of content—specifically quoted texts, references or bibliographies, commonly used generic terms, legal provisions, and mathematical equations—from the plagiarism detection process. The study aims to systematically assess the limitations inherent in existing plagiarism detection software, particularly in light of the UGC's recommendations. By doing so, it seeks to determine how the exclusion of these specific content types could contribute to a more accurate and nuanced understanding of academic integrity, potentially reducing false positives and ensuring that plagiarism detection aligns more closely with scholarly practices. Additionally, the paper will investigate how these proposed exclusions could support a more fair and transparent evaluation of academic work while promoting greater respect for intellectual property. To conclude, the paper will offer a set of actionable recommendations aimed at enhancing the functionality and effectiveness of plagiarism prevention tools, ensuring they are better aligned with UGC's guidelines and more supportive of a robust academic environment.

From the above studies, it is clear that those studies that address Turnitin plagiarism detection text-matching software were concentrated in foreign countries outside of Africa. It is evident that none of the reviewed studies actually focused on faculty member' collaboration either in Nigeria or elsewhere in the world. This implies that this study is novel in view of the fact that studies of this kind are actually limited or nonexistent. The review has also shown that most of the studies that focused on Turnitin plagiarism detection text-matching software were those in the sciences, particularly those directed toward finding solutions to promoting academic integrity, at the expense of the humanities, particularly faculty members (head of department). Because faculty members in Landmark University also engaged in Turnitin plagiarism detection text-matching software, it is therefore important to consider faculty awareness, perceptions, and lived experiences with Turnitin plagiarism detection software at Landmark University, Nigeria.

Benefit-wise, Turnitin plagiarism detection text-matching software are critical because they enable faculty to work together to address challenging issues and promoting academic integrity. They also assist faculty improving in paraphrasing, source integration, and citation accuracy. The visual nature of the Originality Report, highlighting matched text, serves as a concrete learning aid, making abstract concepts of plagiarism more tangible for learners. To the faculty, it also encourages students to develop original thinking and writing habits while providing instructors with a tool to detect and discourage plagiarism. In addition to that, Turnitin Originality.

Arising from the review of the literature, it is clear that while academics in other disciplines engaged in research Turnitin plagiarism detection text-matching software that resulted in Turnitin plagiarism detection text-matching software, limited literature is available to showcase the efforts of the research faculty awareness, perceptions, and lived experiences with Turnitin plagiarism detection software, particularly in the context of faculty members in Landmark University, Nigerian.

3. Research Methodology

This study employed a phenomenology-informed qualitative case study design to explore faculty awareness, perceptions, and lived experiences with Turnitin at Landmark University, Nigeria. While pure phenomenological inquiry typically requires unstructured, open-ended interviews to capture the essence of lived experience, this study adapted phenomenological principles within a case study framework to balance depth of inquiry with the practical constraints of online data collection across a dispersed participant group. The design prioritised the exploration of subjective meaning-making while maintaining sufficient consistency to enable cross-case thematic analysis.

To achieve this design, a total of twenty-five faculty members (heads of department) from four colleges were purposively selected from Landmark University. Purposive sampling ensured that participants were professionals actively engaged with Turnitin through their supervisory and assessment responsibilities. All participants had direct, ongoing experience using Turnitin for plagiarism detection, graduate supervision, and research output verification, making them well-positioned to provide rich insights into the phenomenon under investigation.

From these participants, data were collected using a semi-structured interview protocol designed to elicit detailed narratives about participants' experiences with Turnitin. The protocol consisted of open-ended questions aligned with the study's five objectives: awareness, perceptions, lived experiences, benefits, and challenges. Probes were developed to encourage elaboration while allowing participants to shape the direction of their accounts. Interviews were conducted online via the Google Forms platform with integrated audio recording functionality. On December 20, 2025, participants were recruited via official university email, which contained an explanation of the study's purpose, an informed consent statement, and a link to the interview instrument. Each interview lasted approximately 5-8 minutes. This duration, while shorter than typical phenomenological interviews, was determined by three factors: (1) participants' availability as senior faculty with demanding schedules, (2) the focused nature of the inquiry on a specific technological phenomenon, and (3) the online, self-scheduled format which required concise engagement. The interview protocol was designed to maximise depth within this constraint through carefully constructed questions that prompted focused reflection. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' explicit consent. The semi-structured format provided sufficient consistency to identify patterns across cases while preserving flexibility for participants to introduce unanticipated themes and elaborate on personally meaningful experiences.

The resulting interviews were analysed using narrative analysis within the phenomenology-informed framework. The analytical procedure involved several systematic steps. All audio recordings were transcribed verbatim using Otter.ai (version 3.4) and manually verified against the original recordings to ensure accuracy. Researchers read and re-read transcripts to gain holistic familiarity with each participant's account. Initial codes were generated inductively to capture recurring experiences, perceptions, and meanings related to Turnitin use. Codes were grouped into broader thematic categories corresponding to the study's objectives: awareness, perceptions, lived experiences, benefits, and challenges. Themes were then contextualised within the broader literature on academic integrity technologies, with attention to both convergences with existing findings and unique insights emerging from the Landmark University context. To enhance trustworthiness, member checking was conducted: participants were provided with transcripts and summary themes to confirm accurate representation of their experiences. Reflexive notes were maintained throughout the analysis process, documenting analytical decisions and potential researcher biases. Detailed contextual description of participants and setting was provided to support transferability judgments by readers. This systematic approach facilitated a nuanced understanding of how Turnitin is experienced within faculty workflows, how it shapes professional practices and identities, and how its role in promoting academic integrity is mediated by institutional, infrastructural, and pedagogical factors.

Throughout the data collection and analysis process, the study adhered to established ethical standards governing research involving human participants. The autonomy, confidentiality, and anonymity of all respondents were rigorously maintained throughout. A semi-structured interview was employed as the primary data collection tool, ensuring participants could respond freely and without coercion. No personal identifiers were collected; all responses were anonymised at the point of data entry. Collected data were used solely for the purposes explicitly outlined in the study. Transparency was upheld in all data handling and reporting procedures, with analytical processes clearly documented. Participation was entirely voluntary. Prospective respondents were fully informed of the study's aims, their rights, and the intended use of their data prior to providing consent. No form of coercion or undue influence was employed. Respondents were explicitly informed of their right to withdraw at any stage without consequence. All procedures conformed to the ethical standards of the institutional research committee and the broader principles of the Helsinki Declaration.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Result

This section presents the findings derived from narrative analysis of faculty interview transcripts. Results are organised thematically according to the study's objectives, with direct quotations presented as evidence and interpretive discussion reserved for the subsequent section.

4.1.1. Faculty awareness of Turnitin

Faculty demonstrated high operational awareness of Turnitin's basic functions but limited familiarity with its pedagogical features. When asked to describe their current level of awareness regarding Turnitin's functionalities beyond plagiarism checking, participants consistently distinguished between procedural knowledge and formative understanding.

One respondent articulated this distinction explicitly:

"Emphatically yes, my awareness is operational but likely incomplete. I am fully aware of its primary function to generate a similarity report by comparing submissions against a massive database, which is mandatory here for all graduate theses and publications. In fact, I am less familiar with its more advanced pedagogical features, such as using GradeMark for inline feedback or setting up draft submissions for formative learning." (KA1)

Another participant attributed their awareness primarily to institutional mandate and informal learning:

"Primarily from institutional mandate and basic procedural training provided by the university when the policy was implemented. This was supplemented by personal experimentation and informal discussions with colleagues about how to interpret the similarity index. There hasn't been sustained, advanced professional development on it, so my awareness is largely self-developed and focused on meeting the submission requirement." (KB2)

A minority of participants (approximately 20%) demonstrated deeper pedagogical awareness:

"I'm well aware that it's not just a plagiarism checker, it's a teaching tool. I regularly use the Originality Report in student consultations to teach citation and paraphrasing. I also appreciate the Grademark feature for efficient feedback." (KC2)

All 24 participating faculty confirmed awareness of Turnitin's existence and mandatory status. The dominant pattern, however, was operational awareness acquired through mandate and self-directed experimentation rather than systematic pedagogical training.

4.1.2. Faculty perceptions of Turnitin

When asked whether Turnitin functions primarily as a punitive/detection tool or a formative/educational tool for promoting integrity, faculty responses revealed a consistent perceptual tension.

One participant captured this duality succinctly:

"This is a tension we navigate daily. Institutionally, it is deployed with a strong punitive emphasis, a gatekeeper for project, dissertation, thesis approval and publication. This shapes student perception of it as a 'gotcha' tool. Personally, I perceive its greater value as a formative educational tool." (KA1)

Another described the gap between desired and actual use:

"When I have the time, I use it to show students visual evidence of poor paraphrasing versus proper citation. However, the pressure of large classes and administrative workload often reduces its use to a summative check, which unfortunately reinforces the punitive perception." (KA2)

Some faculty framed Turnitin primarily in procedural terms:

"I comply because it's required, but I don't find it particularly constructive. It feels bureaucratic, another box to tick before grading. Interpreting the reports takes time, and

students often panic over high similarity scores from quoted material. I believe integrity is better taught through dialogue and scaffolded assignments. Turnitin sometimes feels like it starts the relationship with suspicion." (KB1)

Others emphasised its role in standardisation and evidence:

"It's a key part of our institutional policy, and I treat it as such. My perception is that it standardises the process across departments. When a case arises, the Turnitin report provides documented evidence, which makes proceedings more transparent and defensible. It's less about my personal teaching philosophy and more about upholding a consistent, university-wide standard." (KB2)

One participant reflected on the limitations of deterrence alone:

"It has certainly created a strong deterrent effect and standardised a minimum check for originality, which was needed. It has made students more cautious about copy-pasting. However, a true culture of integrity goes beyond deterrence. It requires understanding why we cite. I'm not sure Turnitin alone has deepened that philosophical understanding. The culture has shifted towards 'avoiding the red flag in Turnitin' rather than a fully internalised commitment to ethical scholarship." (KC2)

4.1.3. Lived experiences with Turnitin

When asked to describe a typical experience of using Turnitin from submission to final assessment, faculty narratives centred on three themes: procedural burden, objectification of evidence, and variable integration into pedagogy.

Procedural burden emerged as a dominant theme:

"The lived experience is often one of added procedural burden. For a thesis, I receive the similarity report along with the document. I must then dedicate significant time to interpret it, filtering out bibliography, checking if high matches are from properly cited sources or from questionable websites. It adds a layer of forensic analysis to my supervisory role. For smaller assignments, the experience is more integrated into the LMS, but the interpretation time remains. It has become a non-negotiable, time-consuming step in the assessment workflow." (KA1)

Another participant described the hidden labour of student support:

"It's the 'interpretive labour.' The software detects matches, but it cannot discern intent or context. My greatest expenditure of time is now in triage and education. I spend hours before each major submission window pre-emptively teaching students how to read their own reports, explaining why bibliographies are flagged, what 'public domain' means, and the difference between legitimate paraphrasing and patchwriting. Then, after submission, I must investigate high scores to differentiate plagiarism from sloppy citation. It has turned a portion of my role from content assessor to forensic analyst and writing coach, a shift not accounted for in my workload." (KC2)

Objectification of evidence was reported as both beneficial and challenging:

"It has provided a concrete, neutral reference point for difficult conversations. Instead of a subjective accusation, I can point to the report and say, 'This section shows a 95% match to this source. Can we discuss how you integrated this idea?' It objectifies the feedback. However, it can also create defensiveness if students view it as an accusation. My experience is that it works best when introduced early as a learning tool, not revealed only at the end as a policing mechanism." (KA2)

Variable integration ranged from transformative to frustrating:

A formative integrator described:

"My experience has been transformative. I've built it into my course design: students submit multiple drafts, and we use the Originality Report as a collaborative editing tool. In one-on-one sessions, I screen-share the report; the colour-coded matches make teaching citation and paraphrasing so tangible. It's shifted my role from grader to writing coach." (KB1)

Conversely, a participant experiencing technical frustration reported:

"Frankly, frustrating. The interface isn't intuitive. Sometimes submissions fail, and the error messages are unhelpful. The reports can be overwhelming, a wall of text with multi-coloured highlights. I've had cases where a clearly plagiarised paper got a low score because the source wasn't in Turnitin's database. It gives a false sense of security. My lived experience is one of constant troubleshooting rather than seamless integration." (KD1)

4.1.4. Benefits of Turnitin

When asked to identify the most significant benefit of Turnitin implementation, faculty responses clustered around five categories: institutional credibility, evidence for judgment, deterrent effect, identification of self-plagiarism, diagnostic utility, and investigative efficiency.

Institutional credibility was most frequently cited:

"The most significant benefit is the protection and standardisation of institutional scholarly output. It provides a defensible, external benchmark that our theses and articles have passed a globally recognised originality check. This boosts the credibility of our degrees and research in the global academic community." (KA1)

Evidence for academic judgment was also prominent:

"It empowers faculty with evidence. It backs up our academic judgments with data, which is crucial in maintaining standards and dealing with complex cases of misconduct." (KA1)

Deterrent effect was noted by multiple participants:

"The most immediate benefit is its deterrent effect. Since we implemented mandatory Turnitin submissions, I've observed a dramatic shift in student attitude. The 'fear of the report' makes them more meticulous about citations. Previously, we dealt with blatant copy-paste from websites. Now, students come to my office before submission asking how to properly paraphrase. It has created a culture of pre-emptive integrity." (KB1)

Identification of self-plagiarism emerged as an unexpected benefit:

"In our final-year projects, Turnitin revealed something surprising: self-plagiarism. A student was reusing significant portions of their own work from a previous semester without citation. This opened a crucial teaching moment about the ethics of duplicate publication and the importance of citing oneself. Without Turnitin, I might never have noticed." (KB2)

Diagnostic utility for writing instruction was reported by pedagogically engaged faculty:

"It serves as a diagnostic tool for writing instruction. The similarity report acts like an X-ray of a student's research methodology. A high percentage in one source indicates over-reliance. Multiple low-percentage matches across many sources can show patchwriting. I use these patterns in class workshops to demonstrate how to better synthesise literature." (KC2)

Investigative efficiency was acknowledged even by critical participants:

"It streamlines the investigation process. Before Turnitin, suspecting plagiarism meant hours of manual searching, typing suspicious phrases into Google, checking library databases. Now, I get a report in minutes. This allows me to focus my energy on the pedagogical response rather than the detective work." (KC1)

4.1.5. Challenges encountered

When asked to identify the most pressing challenges in using Turnitin, faculty responses revealed three temporal dimensions: infrastructural and interpretive challenges (present), adaptive and policy challenges (emerging), and AI-related challenges (future).

Infrastructural and interpretive challenges were immediate and pervasive:

"The challenges are multifaceted. Infrastructural issues like unstable internet can delay report generation. Interpretive challenges are major: the software cannot discern context, so a high similarity score from a well-cited literature review requires careful manual

investigation, which is time-intensive. There's also a sociocultural challenge; students come from diverse educational backgrounds with different conceptions of authorship, and Turnitin's Western-centric model can seem confusing or unfairly stringent to them." (KA1)

Paradigm shift and training deficits were identified as foundational barriers:

"The most profound challenge was not the software itself, but the paradigm shift it demanded. We moved from a system of trust and personal judgment to one reliant on a digital metric, the similarity score. There was a severe lack of structured training; we were simply given credentials and expected to understand its pedagogical application. This led to inconsistent use across departments. Some colleagues used it as a punitive 'gotcha' tool, while others ignored it entirely, creating confusion and unfairness for students." (KC1)

AI-assisted plagiarism was identified as an emerging threat:

"With the proliferation of sophisticated AI paraphrasing tools and chatbots like ChatGPT, Turnitin's core text-matching algorithm may become less effective. We will encounter 'AI-assisted plagiarism' that leaves no direct text match. This will force us to re-evaluate what we mean by 'originality' and will likely create a new layer of interpretive difficulty, needing complementary tools and a deeper focus on assessing student voice and critical thinking process over just text similarity." (KA2)

Ethical and legal precedent was raised as a future concern:

"The future challenge I see is ethical and legal precedent. As AI-generated content blurs the line, we will face unprecedented academic misconduct cases. Our policies and disciplinary committees are not yet equipped for this. The software creates the evidence, but we lack the legal-ethical framework to adjudicate what it finds." (KB1)

Perpetual system management was identified as an ongoing institutional challenge:

"It's the myth of the 'set-and-forget' system. Administrators think once it's licensed, the job is done. The reality is constant configuration management: updating rubrics, managing institutional repositories, integrating with our Learning Management System, and troubleshooting file compatibility issues. The future challenge is scalability and advanced analytics. As demand grows and we want deeper data on plagiarism trends across colleges, the system requires more sophisticated, and costly, administration. The challenge is perpetual system management, not a one-time implementation." (KB2)

4.2. Discussion

This study set out to investigate the nuanced human factors; awareness, perceptions, and lived experiences, that mediate the effectiveness of the mandated Turnitin plagiarism detection software at Landmark University, Nigeria. The findings reveal a complex landscape where the technological tool is successfully institutionalised as a procedural gatekeeper but has yet to be fully integrated as a transformative pedagogical asset. This discussion interprets these findings within the local context of Landmark University and the broader literature on academic integrity technology.

First, regarding faculty awareness, the study confirms a significant gap identified in the literature (Murch et al., 2025; Obeng-Ofori & Adaobi, 2025). Faculty awareness is predominantly operational and compliance-oriented, focused on generating and submitting similarity reports as mandated. While this ensures a baseline level of use, it aligns with Brickhill et al.'s (2025) observation that awareness of a tool's existence does not equate to a deep understanding of its functionalities. The lack of awareness of Turnitin's formative features, such as its use for iterative draft feedback, suggests that the university's implementation has prioritised detection over education. This creates a scenario where the software's full potential to build academic writing skills, as highlighted by Turnitin (2025) and Abalkina (2025), remains underutilised.

Second, the analysis of faculty perceptions uncovers a fundamental tension. Faculty intellectually perceive Turnitin's value as a pedagogical aid for teaching citation and paraphrasing, yet they recognise that its institutional deployment and student reception often frame it as a punitive, surveillance mechanism. This duality mirrors the global dichotomy discussed by Dawson and

Sutherland (2024) between “formative integrators” and “summative validators.” At Landmark University, many faculty members embody both roles: they desire to use the tool formatively but are constrained by workload and policy frameworks that emphasise its summative, validation function. This perceptual conflict may hinder the development of a unified, educational approach to academic integrity, keeping the culture at the level of deterrence rather than internalised ethics.

The lived experiences of faculty, as narrated, center on the themes of added procedural burden and the objectification of evidence. The integration of Turnitin has undeniably added a step of forensic analysis to the assessment and supervision process. While this provides concrete evidence for upholding standards, a significant benefit, it also consumes considerable time that could be spent on other instructional activities. This experience underscores the finding by Wong and Lim (2023) that faculty in certain contexts view such software as an external bureaucratic imposition. However, the positive experience of using the report as a neutral reference point for student feedback aligns with Alzahrani and Salama's (2023) view of the tool's potential to concretise abstract concepts and improve student-instructor communication about writing.

The identified benefits strongly align with the university's strategic goals. The foremost benefit is the standardisation and credentialisation of scholarly output. By mandating Turnitin checks, Landmark University leverages global technology to signal the rigor and originality of its degrees and publications, enhancing its international credibility. This addresses a core concern in Nigerian higher education about meeting global scholarly standards. The secondary benefit of empowering faculty with defensible evidence is crucial in an environment where disputes over originality can be contentious. This benefit reinforces the tool's role as a key component of institutional quality assurance.

Finally, the challenges are both immediate and future-facing. Current challenges, such as infrastructural instability and the time-intensive need for contextual interpretation of reports, reflect the specific realities of the Sub-Saharan African educational ecosystem, as noted by Aboyade et al. (2025) and Nketsiah et al. (2024). These are not merely technical glitches but are substantive barriers to effective and consistent use. The anticipated challenge posed by Generative AI is paramount. As tools like ChatGPT evolve, they threaten to circumvent the very text-matching logic upon which Turnitin is built, leading to what may be termed “AI-assisted plagiarism.” This emerging reality, hinted at by emerging scholarship (Originality.AI, 2025), calls for a proactive re-evaluation of assessment design and a shift in focus from text-matching to assessing cognitive process and authentic student voice.

Therefore, this case study reveals that at Landmark University, Turnitin plagiarism detection text-matching software functions effectively as a systemic control mechanism but only partially as a cultural or pedagogical one. The findings bridge the critical gap in the literature by providing empirical, context-specific evidence from a leading Nigerian university. They demonstrate that successful technological adoption requires more than policy mandate; it necessitates sustained investment in pedagogical training for faculty, a strategic shift in messaging to students towards formative learning, and infrastructure support to mitigate local challenges. As the threat landscape evolves with AI, the university must look beyond Turnitin plagiarism detection text-matching software as a singular solution and foster a holistic academic integrity ecosystem that combines technology with robust ethics education, critical assessment design, and supportive faculty development.

4.3. *Limitation of the Study*

The findings in this study are limited. This is because this study offers important insights into only faculty interactions with Turnitin plagiarism detection text-matching software at Landmark University, Nigeria, while acknowledging several methodological and contextual limitations. The single-case study design, focused exclusively on Landmark University, restricts the generalisability of findings to other institutions with differing policies, resources, and academic cultures. The purposive sampling of selected twenty-five actively engaged faculty members ensures relevance but risks bias by excluding perspectives of those less compliant or resistant to Turnitin plagiarism detection text-matching software, potentially underrepresenting negative experiences. Data collection through structured online interviews provided consistency but limited the emergence of unexpected themes and excluded faculty with weaker digital literacy or

unstable Internet access. Reliance on self-reported data introduces the possibility of social desirability bias, with participants potentially aligning responses to institutional expectations rather than authentic practices. Furthermore, the cross-sectional design captures only a snapshot in time, overlooking the evolving nature of faculty awareness and experiences as policies, training, and technologies change. Despite these limitations, the study contributes a valuable contextualised understanding of Turnitin plagiarism detection text-matching software's role within one Nigerian university. In light of this, it underscores the importance of comparative, longitudinal, and mixed-methods research to build a more comprehensive picture of plagiarism detection technologies across diverse African higher education settings.

5. Conclusion

Undeniably, this study was initiated to address a significant gap identified in the introduction: the stark disconnects between the global mandate for plagiarism detection technologies like Turnitin and the profound lack of empirical understanding regarding their human-mediated implementation within specific contexts, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. As outlined in the objectives, the research sought to move beyond a technical evaluation and instead investigate the core human factors, faculty awareness, perceptions, and lived experiences, that ultimately determine whether such software strengthens academic integrity or remains a procedural hurdle.

The findings presented have successfully fulfilled these objectives. First, they provided a clear assessment of faculty awareness, revealing it to be predominantly operational and compliance-focused, with limited engagement with the tool's broader pedagogical potential. Second, they elucidated faculty perceptions, uncovering the critical tension wherein Turnitin is intellectually valued as an educational aid yet is often experienced and perceived by faculty as a punitive mechanism due to institutional deployment styles. Third, the exploration of lived experiences detailed the daily reality of added procedural burden alongside the benefit of objective evidence, painting a nuanced picture of integration into academic workflows. Fourth, the evaluation confirmed key benefits, most notably the standardisation of scholarly output and the empowerment of faculty with defensible evidence. Finally, the study identified both immediate and future challenges, from infrastructural and interpretive issues to the looming threat posed by generative AI to the software's fundamental logic.

The importance of these findings to the field is threefold. Contextually, they provide urgently needed empirical data from a high-ranking Nigerian university (Landmark University), filling a geographical void in the literature and challenging the uncritical transposition of Western models of academic integrity technology to African institutions. Theoretically, the study validates the necessity of examining technology adoption through an integrated lens of awareness, perception, and lived experience, demonstrating that these constructs are inseparable in determining real-world effectiveness. Practically, the findings offer actionable insights for university administrators, instructional designers, and integrity officers. They argue compellingly that for Turnitin to evolve from a successful control mechanism to a genuine catalyst for an integrity culture, strategic investment must shift. This requires moving beyond mandatory policy to include sustained, pedagogical training for faculty; clear, formative communication with students; reliable infrastructure support; and proactive planning for a post-AI writing assessment landscape.

Therefore, this research concludes that at Landmark University, Turnitin has been effectively institutionalised as a gatekeeper for originality but remains an under-leveraged asset for educational transformation. The study affirms that the cornerstone of academic integrity in the digital age is not the sophistication of the detection algorithm, but the depth of the human engagement with it. The path forward lies not in more advanced software, but in more supportive, reflective, and pedagogically informed implementation strategies. This is absolutely commendable.

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Authors' Contributions

Adeniyi Isaiah Kayode: Writing original draft preparation. Ideas; formulation or evolution of overarching research goals and aims. **Adeyinka Tella, Musediq Tunji Bashorun, Samson Oyeniyi Akande, George Osas Eromosele:** Expanded the review of existing scholarship on AI literacy and academic librarianship, integrating global perspectives to strengthen the study's foundation. **George Osas Eromosele, Sunday Adebisi Oguntayo, Oragwa Mark, Yusuf Muhammad Sani:** Co-wrote sections of the findings and discussion, particularly focusing on the perceived benefits of AI literacy in professional practice.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the conduct of this study, the interpretation of the findings, or the preparation of this manuscript. The research was carried out independently, without any financial, institutional, or personal relationships that could be perceived as influencing the outcomes.

AI Usage Declaration

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used only in supportive roles during the preparation of this study. Specifically, AI applications assisted with grammar and style refinement (Grammarly, Copilot). No AI systems were employed to generate, fabricate, or alter primary data, and all analysis, interpretation, and conclusions. The author(s) remain fully responsible for the content of this manuscript