# Preparation of Students in Academic Referencing and Citation: The Case of School of Education Students at the University of Zambia

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**Abstract**
This study investigated whether students of the School of Education at the University of Zambia were adequately prepared in referencing and citation or not. A mixed methods approach was used; both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed in this study. Self-administered questionnaires were used to collect data from two hundred and ten (210) third and fourth year randomly selected undergraduate students. Further, five hundred (500) students' assignments were collected and checked to verify lecturers' marking and comments on referencing and citation. Quantitative data was analysed by the use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 16.0) to derive frequencies, percentages, mean, standard deviation, significant differences and similarities between programmes and the responses provided. Results indicated that students were exposed to many different referencing styles. The most common among these were the American Psychological Association (APA) referencing style, followed by the Harvard and Chicago referencing styles in that order. The results further showed that the majority of the students did not demonstrate understanding and skills in referencing and citation. Failure by students to understand referencing was reported to result from, among others, inconsistencies by lecturers in their own understanding of the referencing styles. Additionally, little emphasis was put on referencing by lecturers when marking assignments. The study recommends that referencing and citation should be accorded serious attention in teaching university students in order to prepare them as scholars and for advanced studies. Further, lecturers themselves need to upgrade their understanding of referencing and citation in order to provide appropriate guidance to their students.

**Keywords:** Referencing Style, Citation, Academic Writing

## 1. CONTEXT AND LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the requirements in academic writing and scholarly publications is referencing and citation of works that others have written. Referencing is the acknowledging of sources used in writing an essay, assignment or any other piece of academic work. When referencing, someone's ideas are acknowledged directly or indirectly. Someone's work is directly acknowledged when the actual words explaining an idea are used by an author. In this case, quotation or citation marks are used and the author, year and page number are written in the text. It is indirect when an author paraphrases an idea that is not originally theirs. In this case, the page number and quotation or citation marks are not used except the author's name and year. Referencing allows readers to access the author's source of information as quickly. It is a verification tool for ascertaining the validity of certain arguments existent in literature (Macmillan n.d.). Other scholars call it a method that demonstrates an author's ability to defend their works as having been scientific backing (Imperial College Library, 2012).

At the end of an assignment or any other academic piece of work comes a list of references usually arranged in some order depending on an adopted referencing style. When writing a list of references, the author must systematically note down full details of the author, date, title and publication details of any material used (Macmillan n.d) Depending on the context, or use of the terms, referencing may also mean citing, although the Imperial College (2012) says referencing comprises citing and the reference list. A citation is a formal reference to a published or unpublished source that is consulted to obtain information (University of California 2018). These are also called in-text citations.

### 1.1 Significance of referencing and citation

Referencing is a symbol of respect for using other people's ideas. In academic writing, referencing and citation are none negotiable. Lamptey and Atta-Obeng (2002) have argued that referencing or citing sources a writer uses are an important part of academic writing that allows the writer or the author to achieve three key things. The first is to acknowledge use of ideas or words that belong to others. This also enables us to distinguish our original work from that which is not ours.

Second, the author shows readers that he/she has read what others have written on the subject and by so doing claims the right to be knowledgeable on the topic under discussion. Studies should be backed by other related or similar works. By citing and referencing, authors argue that their basis of argument does not lie in a vacuum but within the realms of socially

constructed reality. By citing or referencing, authors additionally justify their work. Furthermore, authors make use of the opportunity that citing and referencing presents an opportunity to highlight the gaps between different works. Taylor (2002) argues that references help authors to validate their work, improve readability and direct the readers' interest. The published research findings are often supported and disputed through the citation of previous studies (Sam, 2014). According to Taylor (2002), references may act as an authority on which one can base an argument or challenge a publication. From the above narrative, the significance of referencing and citation in academic writing therefore cannot be disputed.

Third, through citation and referencing an author leads readers to locate for themselves the sources of information that one has used. In agreeing with Lamptey & Atta-Obeng (2002), Masic (2013) says referencing is critical in scientific circles because it enables the readers to identify and find the sources used in any article or publication. Masic (2013) emphasises that authors need to be accurate, complete and consistently apply the rules of referencing, explaining that a referenced article helps readers to know how a particular research fits with previous researches in the same or similar fields. As Siebers & Holt (2000) state, authors have a primary responsibility to be accurate in citing references when submitting articles to international journals.

Beyond mere accuracy, referencing is an ethical issue. It is a moral issue that requires an author to disclose to the readers that certain words, ideas or concepts have been borrowed from other writers rather than pretending to own what is not theirs. Authors who do not acknowledge or disclose their sources of information open themselves to questions regarding their integrity. They are worth calling 'academic thieves". The importance of being knowledgeable with regard to referencing and citation is apparent. Readers find pleasure and confidence in a work that is well researched and acknowledges other scholars' works.

Using other authors' works without acknowledging their effort is known as plagiarism. The Graduate Student Instructor Teaching & Resource Center, (2016) says plagiarism constitutes copying others' works into one's homework, term paper, or dissertation without acknowledgement, or use of views, opinions or insights of another without acknowledgement. According to The Graduate Student Instructor Teaching & Resource Center, (2016) plagiarism also includes paraphrasing another person's written work or phraseology without acknowledgement. Failure to acknowledge sources, in whatever form, constitutes a serious

breach of academic integrity for which the author would be penalized whether the failure to cite sources is deliberate or inadvertent (Williams College, n.d).

In terms of penalties imposed on student offenders, Tennant, Rowell and Duggan (2007) in a study to identify the range and spread of penalties available for student plagiarism among UK Higher Education Institutions, found over 25 different penalties among 157 participating institutions.

Plagiarism has many adverse personal and national consequences. For instance, undeserving people might get top jobs they are hardly qualified for. Thus, because they claim originality of the work they have plagiarised, they pose as though they are skilled in a given job yet not. This has economic and developmental consequences on a nation because such people hardly replicate their knowledge and skills in a given job obtained because of a fake qualification resulting from plagiarism. For instance, Hungarian President Pal Schmitt in 2012 announced his resignation after an alleged plagiarism scandal over his doctorate which he obtained in 1992 (Guardian, 2012). In July 2018, the AP News (2018) reported that Tatana Mala, Prague Minister of Justice resigned amidst allegations of plagiarism. To avoid embarrassment in academic circles, referencing and citation is a critical undertaking for all writers.

## 1.2 Extent of breach and challenges in referencing and citation

We do not have adequate literature of the extent of breach in referencing and citation in Zambia. However, available literature outside Zambia shows cases of failure by students to adhere to referencing and citation rules. Taylor (2002) reports of inaccuracy in referencing, especially in the medical literature, amounting to 60% errors of all citations in some journals. Most errors in referencing relate to names of authors, title of the journal, volume, year and page. Siebers & Holt (2000) reported that errors in referencing hinder retrieval, making it more difficult, time consuming and frustrating to readers and librarians when referencing errors include wrong year of publication, volume, first page number and the title of the journal.

Students face many challenges when writing references and in-text citations. Sometimes the challenge comes because of the requirement to use different referencing styles across different courses. Referencing and citation is a very important undertaking in academic writing. Students in higher education institutions writing advanced assignments, academic and research papers are taught referencing and citation styles. However, procedures used to cite sources vary among different fields of study (University of California, 2018).

Studies show that students in higher education institutions fail to acknowledge their sources of data in academic discourse such as assignments. For example, Kargbo (2010) found that undergraduate students faced difficulties in citing references in their academic work due to inconsistencies in the manner of citing. Jomaa & Bidin (2017), in a study of perspectives of EFL doctoral students on challenges of citations in academic writing, found that challenges in citation included difficulties of addressing the credibility of information in published sources, adopting a stance toward the citations, insufficient knowledge about citations, and second language difficulties (Jomaa & Bidin 2017). Students further lacked paraphrasing skills. The lack of citation knowledge by students was blamed on the fact that students were only guided once on this aspect at the time of entry into the university.

Manchishi, Ndhlovu and Mwanza, (2015), in a study of common mistakes committed and challenges faced in research proposal writing by University of Zambia postgraduate students, found that among the many challenges students faced was wrong referencing and plagiarism. No further details were provided on the nature and extent of wrong referencing and plagiarism. Malanga (2017) reports difficulties of correct citation of sources of information among students in universities in Pakistan, Ghana and the United States of America- USA. In Malawi, Malanga (2017) found that students demonstrated unusually high difficulties in identifying different sources of information. Further, the respondents lacked adequate knowledge on how to write correctly citations and references. However, Malanga (2017) does not provide the causes of difficulties in finding sources of information supposed that the problem could have been due to students' lack of familiarity with the various bibliographic and reference management software tools available to students.

According to Power (2016), plagiarism presents a problem for all educators and attributes its increase among students to electronic material. Agosto, Rozaklis, MacDonald & Abels (2010) have argued that a number of factors affect the teaching of referencing and that includes technological advancements which have seen a push towards the use of electronic devices even when referencing, increase in virtual reference services among others. For example, Torres-Diaz, Duart, & Hinojosa-Becerra, (2018) in a study of Plagiarism, Internet and Academic Success at University, found significant relationship between the level of knowledge of internet, hours of connection and income levels related to plagiarism. In addition, the advent of internet-based blogging for example, with the use of links may mislead students into believing that academic work should follow similar trends (Ohio State University, n.d).

According to Jereb, Perc, Lammlein, Jerebic, Urh, Podbregar, & Sprajc, (2018), other factors such as teaching, publication of the code of ethics and training students to deal with pressure are said to be factors associated with plagiarism. In a study by Jereb *et al* (2018), teaching factors have a greater influence on plagiarism in Slovenia than in Germany recommending that the implementation and publication of a code of ethics, and on training students would help deal with the pressure.

## 1.3 Problem Statement

Universities worldwide have either developed their own referencing styles or have adopted other universities' referencing styles used by their students and affiliate institutions. In line with this practice, university faculties advise their students to follow certain referencing styles and not others. An institution that adopts a particular type or format of referencing demonstrates adherence to the ethics of the referencing style adopted and overcomes challenges of confusing students as to what referencing style to follow. In universities, referencing and citation styles should be taught to students. At the University of Zambia, the School of Education places great significance on introducing students to referencing and citation. However, it is not clear whether students studying the different programmes in education have acquired adequate knowledge and skills in referencing and citation, the reason this study was conducted.

## 1.4 Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following research questions:-

i.   Do students in the School of Education at the University of Zambia possess adequate knowledge of referencing and citation?

ii.  How do students perceive the way they are prepared in referencing and citation?

iii. What challenges do the students face as they are prepared in referencing and citation?

## 2. METHODOLOGY

To explore this study topic, we adopted a mixed methods approach in order to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Thus, the problem needed to be understood from a deductive and inductive point of view. From the deductive point of view, we expected to generalise the results of the study to the school so emphasis is accorded to address an identified problem. The qualitative data (inductive point of view) was expected to complement the quantitative data by providing explanations to certain quantitative questions that needed 'why' answers. This means therefore that this study was more biased to quantitative techniques supported by qualitative techniques of data collection.

## 2.1 Demographic data

Out of the 13 programmes offered in the School of Education, we drew respondents from six (06) programmes. These programmes were randomly selected using a pick-a-lot technique. Students were drawn from Bachelor of Arts with Education, Bachelor of Education in Special Education, Bachelor of Education in Sociology of Education, Bachelor of Education in Educational Psychology, Bachelor of Arts in Zambian Cultural Ceremonies, and Bachelor of Mathematics and Science. The study captured 210 third and fourth year level students for the study. Third and fourth year students were specifically targeted because we thought having been in the University for three and four years respectively, they had been exposed to referencing and citation skills long enough for us to be able to test them on various aspects of referencing and citations. We wanted to capture a wide range of data from the different programmes and also compare the referencing styles known and used by students in the different programmes. Thus, through a mixed method study, we expected to draw deductive conclusions based on quantities as well as descriptions of the experiences students had while learning referencing in the school. This helped us to have a thorough understanding of what goes on in the teaching and learning of referencing styles.

Close and open ended questionnaires were administered by clustered random sampling. The questionnaires had questions that solicited for understanding of concepts related to referencing and these were marked and graded. Information sought in the questionnaires included students' biographical data and knowledge of reference styles. In addition, 500 marked assignments were collected for verification of what students reported through the questionnaires. Approximately eight three (83) assignments were collected from each of the sampled programmes.

## 2.2 Data analysis

Data was analysed in two phases. First, the quantitative data was subjected to the Statistical Package for Social Science - SPSS analysis to derive descriptive statistics such as frequencies and significant differences, mean and standard deviation. This helped us to understand whether students really understood referencing or not. The qualitative part of the data was analysed as themes that were mainly used to provide detail or reasons to certain quantitative questions respondents were asked. In some cases, common qualitative responses were quantified in terms of frequencies to obtain some form of coding density to explain the extent of a response.

## 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
### 3.1 Research Question 1: Students' Knowledge of Referencing Styles

Students were assessed on knowledge of referencing styles at two levels namely, knowledge and application levels. At knowledge level, we expected students to be able to list or name the types referencing styles they knew. They were further asked to define the concepts; referencing, citation and bibliography. At application level, students were expected to give examples of how to cite sources. They were further provided with 'ready to read' reference lists for which they were required to state the type of reference style used. The results showed that at the knowledge level, students knew the different types of referencing styles.

*Table 1: Tallied responses of referencing styles students knew.*

| S/N | Referencing style | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | APA | 194 | 39 |
| 2 | Harvard | 178 | 36 |
| 3 | Chicago | 20 | 4 |
| 4 | MLA | 26 | 5 |
| 5 | Oxford | 15 | 3 |
| 6 | MLS | 2 | 0 |
| 7 | Cambridge | 4 | 1 |
| 8 | Bibliography | 45 | 9 |
| 9 | Footnotes | 10 | 2 |
| 10 | Journal | 3 | 1 |
| | **TOTAL** | **497** | **100** |

**Note:** *the total number of tallies does not reflect the total number of respondents because some students wrote more than one reference style meaning they had knowledge of more than referencing style.*

The results in Table 1 showed that students had knowledge of different referencing styles. For instance, the commonly known referencing styles were the American Psychological Association (APA), (194; 39%) and Harvard styles; (178; 36%). Others listed were Chicago (20; 4%), MLA (26; 5%), Cambridge (4; 1%) and Oxford (15; 3%). The Chi square computation revealed a positive association between the programmes of study and APA / Harvard citation at ($\chi^2$ (50, $n = 206$) =87.8, $p$ <.05). The results were significant at .001. With tallying analysis used, the results show that many students knew more than one reference. The results agree with those of Malanga (2017) who found that in Malawi undergraduate students in the Faculty of Education at Livinstonia University expressed familiarity with APA referencing style, although this study shows a further familiarity with the Harvard referencing style. This study and that of Malanga (2017) acknowledged the importance of providing citation and references to academic work to avoid plagiarism. However, there were also

students who did not understand referencing styles. Those who did not understand the referencing styles listed Journal, bibliography, MLS as referencing styles when in fact they are not.

Data concerning referencing styles students were advised to use in their assignments is illustrated in figure *1* below.
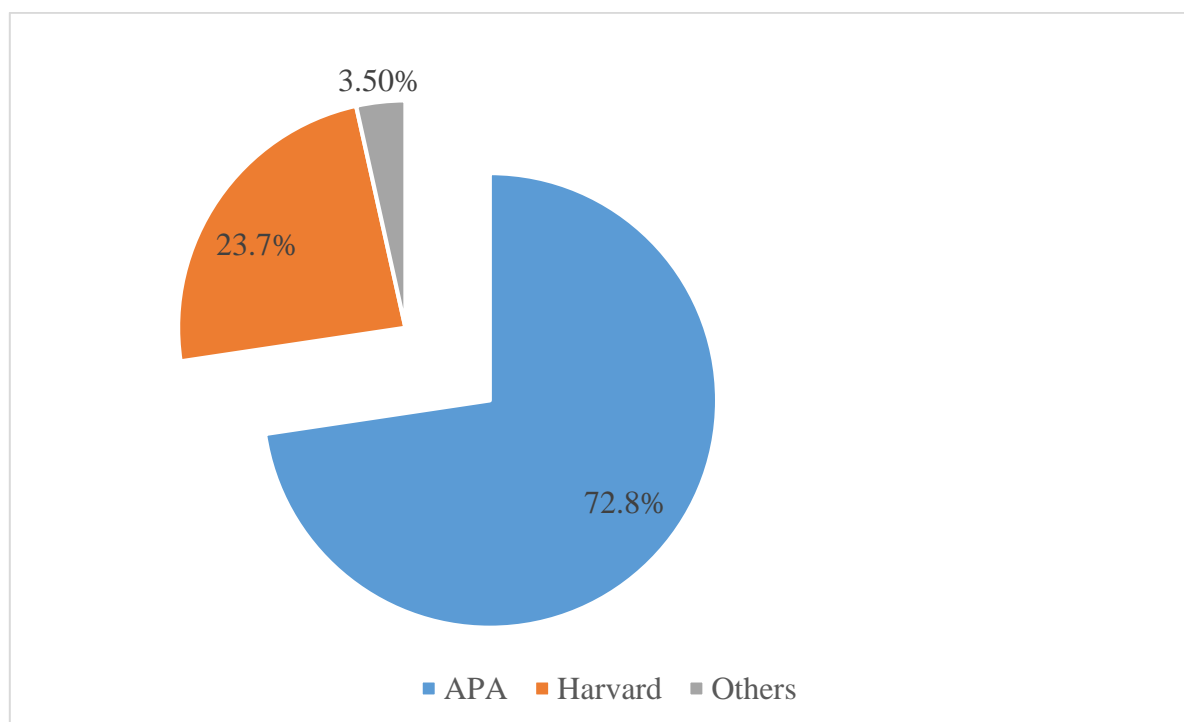


**Figure 1***: Referencing styles advised by lecturers: students views*

Figure 1 reveals that 72.8% (166) of the students were advised to use the APA referencing style in their assignments, while 23.7% (54) were advised to use the Harvard citation style. Furthermore, 3.5% (8) of the students were advised to use other referencing styles like Chicago and footnotes and bibliography. Thus, some students were advised to use more than one referencing style. From the results, students were introduced to various referencing styles because they took different courses.

Students were further asked to define the concepts 'referencing', 'citation' and 'bibliography'. We found that although students were able to list the different styles of referencing, defining the concepts referencing, citation and bibliography was problematic. Further, on another activity that required students to name a referencing style used from a list of six different styles, students found difficulties identifying particular types of referencing styles in a list of references provided. After grading 6 of the questions that assessed student understanding and

application of reference styles, we concluded that while they could list the reference styles, they failed to define or describe the concepts of referencing, citation and bibliography. Table 2 below shows the computation of statistics using the scores they obtained from the definition.

**Table 2***: Descriptive Statistics: mean scores from definitions of referencing and citation styles*

| | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Minimum | Maximum | Percentiles | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | 25th | 50th (Median) | 75th |
| Scores | 210 | 36.4190 | 17.97168 | .00 | 83.00 | 25.0000 | 33.0000 | 50.0000 |

The mean grade score for the 210 respondents was 36.4% while the standard deviation (SD) was 17.9. The maximum grade was 83% while the lowest was 0. Going by the deviation of scores from the mean, the performance seems to be so bad that even if the standard deviation was added to the mean, the highest would get 54% while the lowest would get 18. The lowest scoring student score gives quite a negative impression of the extent to which referencing styles were learned. Below are sample statements of definitions that students gave about referencing, citations and bibliography:

**3.2.1 Referencing**
- This is the citations we write at the end of every academic writing.
- This is the type of written words/sentences that contain the source of information for a particular document.
- It is the way of acknowledging the source of information used in the assignment at the end of an essay or book.
- Referencing is giving a clear picture on where the information cited has been taken from.
- This is the acknowledgement of sources of data that are used.
- This is the citing and /or reviewing or acknowledging the authors finding.
- Notes recognising sources of information at the end of an essay.
- It is providing a book or an article with citations of sources of information.
- This is the redirection of a piece of information to its original source.

**3.2.2 Citation**
- Is the acknowledgement and quotations we make for using information that scholars used.

- This is the short form of referencing done within the piece of writing that just includes the name and the year.
- Citation means using an author's information and the name as well as the year of publication when writing an assignment.
- Citation is giving evidence on the information written and by which scholar and year
- Making mention of where the data that is used in an assignment/document is located in the source.
- This is the short note recognizing the source of information.
- These are actual notes in the essay recognising a source of information.
- It is a quotation from, or reference to a book, paper or author especially in scholarly work.
- It is the indication of where a piece of information was sourced from.

### 3.2.3 Bibliography

- Is the type of referencing mostly used in history
- This is the way of information representation in terms of its source which is normally used in history (discipline)
- This is the referencing style where names are of authors are written beginning with their surnames at the end of a written work
- This is the history about something.
- A list of similar books/articles/readings that are found in a particular document.
- This is the information listing the acknowledgement authors for referrals or further study and research.
- It is a list of books, journals and others materials that have been used in writing an essay which includes publication, name of the author and more.
- This is the list of the books referred to in scholarly work typically printed as an appendix
- Alphabetically arranged references that have been used in a piece of writing

From the definitions above, it was clear that although some students attempted to define the concepts correctly, others failed to define or explain the concepts correctly.

### 3.2  Research question 2: Students opinion on whether they were well prepared or not  in referencing and citation

We asked students questions relating to whether lecturers prepared them adequately in referencing styles or not. Table 3 reflects the questions that were asked. Different programmes that were involved in the study were compared through a chi square test of independence to see whether there were differences in the way students perceived their preparation in referencing and citation.

**Table 3:** *Questions about referencing given to students*

| QUESTION | CHARACTERISTIC | CATEGORY | YES | NO | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.1 | Were you taught referencing styles? | BA ED Special Education | 57 (27.4%) | 6 (2.9) | 63 (30%) |
| | | BA ED Sociology | 14 (6.7%) | 2(1%) | 16 (7.7%) |
| | | BA ED Psychology | 17 (8.2%) | 0 (0%) | 17 (8.2%) |
| | | BA ZCC | 61 (29.3) | 6 (2.9%) | 67 (32.2%) |
| | p - value = .005 | BA ED | 37 (17.8%) | 3 (1.4%) | 40 (19.2%) |
| | | BSC ED | 2 (1%) | 3 (1.4%) | 5 (2.4%) |
| | | **TOTAL** | 188 (90.4%) | 20 (9.6%) | 208 (100%) |
| 1.2 | Did you understand when you were taught referencing styles? | BA ED Special Education | 47 (23.3%) | 16 (7.9%) | 63 (31.2%) |
| | | BA ED Sociology | 12 (5.9%) | 3 (1.5%) | 15 (7.4%) |
| | | BA ED Psychology | 15 (7.4%) | 2 (1%) | 17 (8.4%) |
| | p - value = .199 | BA ZCC | 48 (23.8%) | 16 (7.9%) | 64 (31.7%) |
| | | BA ED | 35 (17.3%) | 3 (1.5%) | 38 (18.8%) |
| | | BSC ED | 3 (1.5%) | 2 (1%) | 5 (2.5%) |
| | | **TOTAL** | 160 (79.25) | 40 (20.8%) | 200 (100%) |
| 1.3 | Were you well prepared in referencing and citation? | BA ED Special Education | 46 (22.8%) | 16 (7.9%) | 62 (30.7%) |
| | | BA ED Sociology | 11 (5.4%) | 5 (2.5%) | 16 (7.9%) |
| | | BA ED Psychology | 12 (5.9%) | 4 (2%) | 16(7.9%) |
| | p-value = .657 | BA ZCC | 43 (21.3%) | 22 (10.9%) | 65 (32.2%) |
| | | BA ED | 26 (12.9%) | 12 (5.9%) | 38 (18.8%) |
| | | BSC ED | 2 (1%) | 3 (1.5%) | 5 (2.5%) |
| | | **TOTAL** | 140 (69.3%) | 62 (30.7)% | 202 (100%) |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.4 | Do lecturers make comments on referencing and citation on your assignments? | BA ED Special Education | 50 (24.6%) | 13 (6.4%) | 63 (31.0%) |
| | | BA ED Sociology | 8 (3.9%) | 8 (3.9%) | 16 (7.9%) |
| | | BA ED Psychology | 11 (5.4%) | 5 (2.5%) | 16 (7.9%) |
| | | BA ZCC | 45 (22.2%) | 19 (9.4%) | 64 (31.5%) |
| | p-value =.173 | BA ED | 28 (13.8%) | 11 (5.4%) | 39 (19.2%) |
| | | BSC ED | 5 (2.5%) | 0 (0%) | 5 (2.5%) |
| | | **TOTAL** | 147 (72.4%) | 56 (27.6%) | 203 (100%) |
| 1.5 | Do lecturers award marks on referencing and citation? | BA ED Special Education | 48 (23.5%) | 16 (7.8%) | 64 (31.4%) |
| | | BA ED Sociology | 12 (5.9%) | 4 (2%) | 16 (7.8%) |
| | | BA ED Psychology | 12 (5.9%) | 4 (2%) | 16 (7.8%) |
| | p – value .833 | BA ZCC | 50 (50%) | 15 (7.4%) | 65 (31.9%) |
| | | BA ED | 27 (13.2%) | 11 (5.4%) | 38 (18.6%) |
| | | BSC ED | 5 (2.5%) | 0 (0%) | 5 (2.5%) |
| | | **TOTAL** | 154 (75.5%) | 50 (24.5) | 204 (100) |
| 1.6 | Do you think lecturers understand referencing and citation? | BA ED Special Education | 53 (25.9%) | 11 (5.4%) | 64 (31.2%) |
| | | BA ED Sociology | 14 (6.8%) | 2 (1%) | 16 (7.8%) |
| | | BA ED Psychology | 17 (8.3%) | 0 (0%) | 17 (8.3%) |
| | p =.410 | BA ZCC | 58 (28.3%) | 7 (3.4%) | 65 (31.7%) |
| | | BA ED | 35 (17.1%) | 3 (1.5%) | 38 (18.5%) |
| | | BSC ED | 4 (2%) | 1 (0.5%) | 5 (2.4%) |
| | | **TOTAL** | 181 (88.3%) | 24 (11.7%) | 205 (100%) |

*Question 1.1 in table 3* asked students whether they were taught referencing styles by lecturers or not. A comparison of Chi-square results between programmes showed a significant difference in responses between programmes and being taught referencing styles at ($\chi^2$ (5, $n =$ 208) =16.81, $p <$.05). Thus the p-value was .005 < .05. Generally, students agreed that lecturers did their part in teaching them referencing styles. For instance, (N= 188; 94.4%) agreed to having been taught while) N = 20; 9.6%) did not agree.

*Question 1.2* in table 3 focussed on whether students understood referencing styles or not. Results showed no significant differences (p=.199) in respondents 'responses at ($\chi^2$ (5, $n =$ 202) =7.30, $p >$.05).   The majority of the students (60; 79.2%), agreed that they understood referencing styles while (42; 20.8%) did not agree.  Table 4 shows the frequency of some qualitative responses by students who said they did not understand referencing styles:

**Table 4**: *Reasons why some students did not understand teaching on referencing*

| Response | Frequency |
| --- | --- |
| Time was short/ it was so brief | 10 |
| Material not well explained | 6 |
| Lecturer was too fast | 2 |
| Taught as a by the way topic | 2 |
| Missed class | 2 |
| Different ways of referencing by lecturers | 2 |
| Referencing not taught | 2 |
| It was a new phenomenon | 1 |
| Lecturers lacked seriousness | 1 |
| Only APA was taught | 1 |
| **Total** | **29** |

The qualitative responses of the students (table 4) show that referencing was given mediocre attention by lecturers. Students who felt they did not understand referencing said this was because referencing was taught for only a short period and it was not well explained either because lecturers were too fast or lacked seriousness when teaching it as a topic.

*Question 1.3* in *table 3* was meant to find out whether students felt they were well prepared in referencing or not. The results showed no significant differences between the different programmes studied. The Chi square test results showed ($\chi^2$ (5, $n = 202$) =3.28, $p >$.05).

Although literal frequency calculations indicate (N= 140; 69.3 %) saying they were well prepared, while (N=62; 30.7%) said they were not. Basically the differences in responses was weaker at ($\varphi$=.127). Thus generally, students felt they were well prepared in referencing styles. For students who said they were not adequately prepared in referencing and citation, the following reasons were given:

**Table 5:** *Reasons some students felt they were not well prepared by lecturers in referencing*

| Response | Frequency |
|---|---|
| Topic not adequately taught | 14 |
| Referencing styles can be confusing | 10 |
| Referencing not emphasized by lecturers | 6 |
| Only APA was taught | 5 |
| Conflicting comments from lecturers | 3 |
| Did not understand the topic | 3 |
| Teaching only focused on books as sources of information | 2 |
| APA style has far too many rules | 1 |
| Taught at too fast a pace | 1 |
| Referencing not taught at all | 1 |
| Lecturers have different referencing styles | 1 |
| **Total** | **47** |

Like in *table 4,* students felt referencing was not given adequate coverage as can be seen from the higher frequency of response by students who said they were not well prepared. Other higher frequency responses were that referencing styles were confusing and that lecturers did not emphasise on it. This explains why one of the students said referencing was only taught as 'a by the way thing'. One very important revelation by students which further shows the challenges they faced in referencing was that lecturers contradicted themselves when guiding students on referencing.

We also asked students to tell whether lecturers made guiding comments on referencing and or awarded marks to the referencing and citation part of academic assignments (see questions 1.4 and 1.5 in *table 3*). On question 1.4 in *table 3*, the chi-square test results showed ($\chi^2$ (5, $n$ = 203) =7.71, $p$ >.05). Differences in responses to this question among programmes were not significant. The majority (147; 72.4 %) said yes while (56; 27.6 %) said no. The strength of the difference was at $\varphi$= .195, which is small. The possibility that all students could have agreed

is certain, bearing in mind the strength of the relationship. Lecturers made comments on citation and referencing in student assignments. Below are some selected guiding comments by some lecturers on students' referencing and citation on assignments that we sampled:

1. *Make an effort as a group to cite material accurately. The study conducted by Lynch and Lund (2011) was done in Malawi and not in Zambia as indicated on page 6 of your document.*

2. *Always cite the source of the material that you have used. Failure to do this, is equal to plagiarism.*

3. *Learn how to correctly cite journals, show dates when online material was accessed.*

4. *Improve in text referencing*

5. *You have to italicize the name of the journal not the article.*

6. *Check the correct format of citing a journal*

7. *Use APA*

Other lecturers just underlined the parts on the reference lists that they considered incorrectly referenced or cited by students without explaining what was wrong. There were some lecturers who simply ticked the reference lists as though all was correct yet there were several mistakes on the student's list of references. For instance, one item on one student's list of references was written, "*The Individual Education Plan Resource Guide 2004*", without giving further details like the publisher and place of publication as well the author but the lecturer ignored this. On another script, no tick was given on the section of reference list. Another surprising comment of a student's reference list was a crossed red line with a comment, "justify your work". On many other student scripts, only marks were indicated without any comments. Generally, although students seemed to agree that they were guided, our check on student assignments revealed that most assignments did not have comments guiding students on how to write references correctly. Thus, only one in every in every five of the five hundred assignments checked had comments made by lecturers on students' citation and referencing.

Further, on awarding of marks to correct citations and referencing on students' assignments, there were no significant differences (p=.833) in responses among the different programmes at Chi square ($\chi^2$ (5, $n = 204$) $=2.11$, $p >.05$). When students were asked whether lecturers awarded marks on referencing and citation styles, majority students (154; 75.5%) said yes, while (50; 24.5%) said, no.

In question 1.6 of *table 3,* students were asked about their perspectives on whether lecturers understood referencing styles or not. There were no significant differences in responses of respondents from the different programmes calculated at ($\chi^2$ (5, *n* = 205) =5.01, *p* >.05). The (p value = .410) was higher than the accepted .05. Thus (181, 88.3 %) said lecturers understand the referencing styles while (24; 11.7 %) said no. Students who said lecturers did not understand referencing styles gave the following reasons:

**Table 6:** *Why some students thought lecturers did not know referencing styles*

| Response | Frequency |
|---|---|
| Inconsistency by lecturers on referencing | 10 |
| Never seen any comment on referencing | 4 |
| They do not catch those who use false references | 3 |
| They only teach one referencing style that they are familiar with | 2 |
| Lecturers seem to be incompetent in the area of referencing | 2 |
| What lecturers teach does not match with other documents that teach about referencing | 1 |
| They comment on referencing style that you should use | 1 |

In *table 6,* we observe that students' perceived inconsistencies in the lecturers' understanding of referencing styles with a frequency response of 10 while other students indicated that there were no comments on the reference part of their assignments.

## 3.3 Research question 3: challenges students faced during their preparation in referencing

From the findings on research question 2 (*perspectives of students on how well they were prepared in referencing*), the results show that students faced some challenges. The first challenge that students faced was differentiating the different referencing and citation styles. *Figure 1* showed that students were introduced to a variety of styles most popular among them were the APA and the Harvard styles. This was compounded by the different subject combinations students take during the course. For instance, if a student is taking educational psychology courses and a teaching subject such as English or history, the student is expected to learn referencing and citation used in Educational Psychology and also the one used in English and History. One student said;

> *It is so confusing you know. In English you are expected to use a different referencing style from that expected when writing an assignment in child*

*neuropsychology, and sometimes even the lecturers give contradicting comments on assignments regarding the style.*

The results seem to suggest that exposure to different styles of referencing and citation styles confused students to some extent. Further, that lecturers were also perceived to have inadequate knowledge in referencing and citation confused some of the students. Thus, although quantitative data in *table 3* (1.6) shows a positive perception towards lecturers understanding referencing styles (181; 88.3%), qualitative responses showed a need for some students with regard to lecturers' knowledge of referencing (see some qualitative responses in tables 5 and 6). For instance, from the qualitative responses, students did not understand referencing and citation well because the topic was not given adequate time. *Table 5* shows results that students did not understand referencing. As a result, they could not easily differentiate which style was APA, Harvard or other. A student lamented;

*You know for me I missed one lesson and that was on referencing. It was only one and that was it, but when it comes to assignments, they still mark reference. It's not fair.*

Other students felt it was difficult to learn referencing and citation well because lecturers did not guide them by writing comments on their assignments;

*Lecturers do not take references seriously because they do not comment on our assignments and in many cases they do not catch those who use false references.*

From the results of study, students faced challenges in referencing and citation because the topic was not granted significance and adequate teaching time. The school of education also used many referencing and citation styles, which confused many students' mastery of the referencing styles demanded to be used on academic tasks.

## 4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study established that students had basic knowledge of referencing and citation. They were able to list the different types of referencing styles used in writing academic and scholarly works. Most students seemed to be familiar with the APA and Harvard referencing styles as these were the most emphasised styles by lecturers. However, when presented with examples of the different referencing styles, the students failed to identify and differentiate the various referencing styles. There were generally no significant differences in students' understanding of referencing and citation styles based on programmes they were pursuing.

Cases of plagiarism are very much linked to the lack of teaching students the moral efficacy of acknowledging other people's works. In this study, we believe students can be nursed to uphold academic writing ethics. Lecturers teaching students should start with teaching the norms of academic writing. If lecturers do not pay attention to teaching students the ethical and moral values of academic writing, including referencing and citation, high levels of academic crimes are bound to occur.

Our conclusion is that the difficulties students have in referencing and citation has a strong relationship with how they are prepared. It appears that students do not receive adequate guidance on how to cite sources and write reference lists in line with the accepted style. While we appreciate students' positive response that lecturers provided adequate guidance, the evidence from our physical check of five hundred assignments showed that only 1 in every five assignments had comments guiding students on referencing. Even then, an analysis of the nature of guidance through comments showed that most comments told students that they were not doing the right thing on referencing without guidance on the correct way of referencing. Without knowledge of referencing and citation, students are likely to plagiarise other peoples' work. We conclude that this situation may lead to failure to build a strong culture of referencing and citation among students which may ultimately in the long run breed a cadre of graduates and scholars who do not uphold ethical standards in scholarly and academic writing. This can be avoided if students are nurtured thoroughly into the culture of referencing and citation.

Plagiarism, through lack of referencing and citation demonstrates a serious lack of respect for other people's published ideas and thoughts and should not be tolerated.

In view of the results, we provide the following recommendations:

i.   The School of Education should place emphasis on teaching students how to cite sources and write references when writing academic assignments.

ii.  The University of Zambia should develop its own referencing style or adopt a preferred style that the institution can prepare their students to follow.

iii. Lecturers in the School of Education should endeavour to provide clear and correct comments on students' assignments as a way of providing continuous learning on referencing and citation to students throughout the duration of the students' study.

iv.  Lecturers should award reasonable marks to referencing and citation to discourage students from plagiarising other people's work and to encourage them to learn the referencing and citation skills effectively.

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