

# Evaluation of APA Citation and Referencing Style for Dissertations Uploaded in the Mzumbe University Institutional Repository

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## **Abstract**

*Citation and referencing are paramount aspects of any scholarly and scientific writing. They are part of indications that the authors have done justice to the works of others and are one of the ways of avoiding plagiarism. This study was conducted to examine the extent to which postgraduate students at Mzumbe University adhere to the APA citation and referencing style in their dissertations uploaded to the Mzumbe Institutional Repository (MUIR) platform for the year between 2013 through 2019. This study employed a cross-sectional research design, which enables data to be collected at a single point in time. A mixed approach was used as the data collection method. A random sampling technique was used to select 128 dissertations from a population of 1056 dissertations uploaded in the MUIR between 2013 and 2019 for content analysis. A purposive sampling strategy was used to select a total of five postgraduate students and three lecturers who were involved in the interviews. Five research methods course outlines were also purposively selected to check if they contain topics or sub-topics on citation and referencing. Microsoft Spreadsheet was used to analyse quantitative data while qualitative data were analysed through content analysis. The findings show that a total of 70; 54.7 per cent of dissertations uploaded in the MUIR for seven years adhered to in-text citation APA style guidelines whereas 58; 45.3 per cent of dissertations did not adhere to the APA citation and referencing style. Major irregularities identified were unnecessary capitalisation, poor insertion of punctuation marks, incorrect use of 'et al' and lack of uniformity in writing the lists of references.*

*The findings also showed that only one out of five postgraduate programme course outlines had a sub-topic on citation and referencing instructions. This study concludes that there was poor quality of in-text citations and referencing among postgraduate dissertations submitted to the MUIR between the years 2013 to 2019. This calls for serious intervention. The study calls upon responsible university units to employ strategies which will help in enforcing students' compliance with dissertation writing guidelines. To ensure compliance, supervisors and external examiners should pay adequate attention to citation and referencing styles when supervising and examining theses and dissertations. There is a need of reviewing postgraduate research methods courses to add a topic on citation and referencing styles. University should also subscribe and sensitise postgraduate students on the importance of using reference management tools for improved citations and referencing styles in academic writing.*

**Keywords:** Citations, referencing style, dissertations, postgraduate students, institutional repository and Mzumbe University

## **Introduction**

Referencing and citation are the most common academic practices in which an author acknowledges the use of the works of others when writing scholarly work(s). Citation is the presentation of a source of work in the body of the text whereas references are the complete list of all sources used in a work which is presented at the end of the work using a given style (Neville, 2012). All sources and resources used in any research and scholarly works need to be acknowledged. The ability to cite and organise references of the sources used in writing scholarly works is one of the skills that postgraduate students and other scholars must learn as they become part of the academic and scholarly community (Vardi, 2012). Prior studies (e.g. Muzata & Banja (2019); Pentang & Bautista, 2022) reported that referencing helps authors to achieve three important objectives: Firstly, the authors admit that he or she has used works belonging to others. Secondly referencing is the justification that the work is supported by the works of other scholars. Thirdly citation and referencing enable readers to locate the sources of information they used. Kargbo (2010) adds that referencing and citation used by the authors verify other scholars' views of facts in their work and they serve as proof that one has worked ethically and honestly in his academic writings. Uzuegbu and Onyenachi (2015) summarised the need for citation and referencing as follows: it proves that scholarly works are substantial and are based on facts, shows the theoretical foundation of the work, allows readers to track and follow the cited works and it is a proof that the author has avoided plagiarism.

Mzumbe University (MU) is one of the public universities in Tanzania where many dissertations and theses are generated by postgraduate students every year. The University has a publication policy (MU, 2014), operational procedures and postgraduate theses and dissertations writing guidelines (MU, 2022). These are the necessary tools for guiding both students and lecturers on how to prepare research works and publications. Furthermore, all postgraduate students' programmes have a module on "Research Methods" where citations and referencing ought to be taught. Despite the fact that the University has in place all these vital tools for guiding postgraduate students to make proper citations and referencing styles, yet there is a great concern as to whether these tools are adequately used which will consequently lead to the production of adequate quality postgraduate students' scholarly works. It is against this backdrop this study was conducted to examine the extent to which postgraduate students at Mzumbe University adhere to the APA citation and referencing style in their dissertations uploaded to the MUIR platform for the years 2013 to 2019.

### **Research Questions**

Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- i. What is the extent to which postgraduate students observe rules of citing and referencing using APA style in their dissertations at Mzumbe University?
- ii. What are the common errors committed by postgraduate students in listing references using APA style at Mzumbe University?
- iii. How can proper citation and referencing styles be improved by the postgraduate students at Mzumbe University?

### **Literature Review**

#### ***Major citations and referencing styles used in academic works***

There are many citations and referencing styles used worldwide such as American Psychological Association (APA), Harvard, Chicago and Modern Language Association (MLA) among others. These different referencing and citation styles have different rules for in-text citations and reference list entries. There are many factors that dictate the choice of citation and referencing style such as areas of specialisation. For example, if one is writing a humanities paper or dissertation/thesis with a lot of quotations, the MLA style will be a good choice to cite page numbers without interrupting the flow of arguments. If one is writing a scientific paper which requires citing a lot of studies APA or Chicago is

recommended as the best style. However, MU publication guideline mandates the use of the APA style.

### ***Challenges encountered when using citations and referencing styles***

Scholarly works on citation and referencing have indicated that authors experience difficulties in organising citations, references and bibliographic sources (Kendall, 2005). On the other hand, Neville (2012) noted that despite citation and referencing being an important element in scientific and scholarly writing, it has been one of the most neglected areas. Muzata and Banja (2019) report that lecturers and language editors do accord little emphasis on issues related to citations and referencing when marking and editing students' scholarly works. Madhusudhan (2016) posits that many students come to universities with little skills or no understanding of citation and referencing style formats, as such, they make a lot of errors. Kargbo (2010) highlights that postgraduate lecturers have unrealistic expectations that their students can properly cite references in their theses and dissertations and as such, they leave them to use any format they think are appropriate.

### ***Common errors in citation and referencing***

Citation and referencing are very important parts of scientific publication and they must be done correctly. Mehregan (2022) points out that one of the misconducts done by students in the publication is the manipulation of the citations. COPE (2019) adds that citation and referencing manipulation is where authors falsely cite references that were never used in their publications or works. A work by Baas and Fennell (2019) reveals that authors particularly academics manipulate citations to increase their online research citations. A study by Rivkin (2020) indicates that some postgraduate students were found grouping together citations at the end of the sentence or paragraph instead of citing them next to the statement they support. Other authors including Habibzadeh (2013) and Bavdekar (2016) report that the majority of students fail to follow such citation and referencing instructions as the proper use of punctuation marks, italic text, abbreviations, names and titles of resources that have been cited. On the other hand, Yap (2020) reports that postgraduate students commit numerical errors which involve publication date, volumes number, issues number, pagination and edition number when using APA style in their works.

Students lack the skills required to properly cite references and seek assistance from their colleagues and librarians. Students are under the mistaken impression that the only motive behind citing references is to avoid plagiarism and to earn good marks. While others remarked that citing references is only a requirement to show the titles of sources consulted in writing their academic works (Lamprey & Atta-Obeng, 2012). Such remarks reveal that postgraduate students face difficulties in properly citing references in their academic works. Betts (2020) mentions that one of the most common errors committed is missing references and citations; a citation within a text needs a reference in the reference list or bibliography. Some students forget to cite sources or create a reference list for an in-text citation. Another error is that references are not organised in alphabetical order. Every style requires the author to put his/her reference in alphabetical order by the first element of the citation. This can be an author's name, title, or corporation.

Another error committed by authors is the use of outdated resources in their citations and list of references. It is important to ensure that the sources used are current, relevant, authoritative, accurate and purposeful. Also, the incorrect use of *et al.* is a common error committed by students (Betts, 2020). *Et al.* is used when you have multiple authors for a source. However, *et al.* is not just used every time you have more than one author. In APA referencing style, *et al.* is used when there are more than two authors in one source (Betts, 2020).

### ***Improving referencing and citation styles***

Managing a list of references or citations for a written academic work can be a frustrating and lengthy process if academics are not conversant with referencing and citation tools/software. Fortunately, there is a solution. To improve one's reference and citation skills, one should learn how to use online citation and reference management tools/software. Reviewed literature including those of Gilmour and Cobus-Kuo (2011), Francese (2013) and Pathak and Johnson (2018) identify the benefits of using online referencing and citation as follows: it saves researchers time and helps them to work more efficiently; helps scholars to create and manage reference lists of their scholarly works; organises citations into specific formats for the preparation of manuscripts and bibliographies; facilitates sharing of information and knowledge among academics; synchronises data across multiple machines as well as offering the advantage of sharing research with others. Furthermore, it facilitates direct importation of publication citations from free sources; subscribes to bibliographic databases and other web pages;

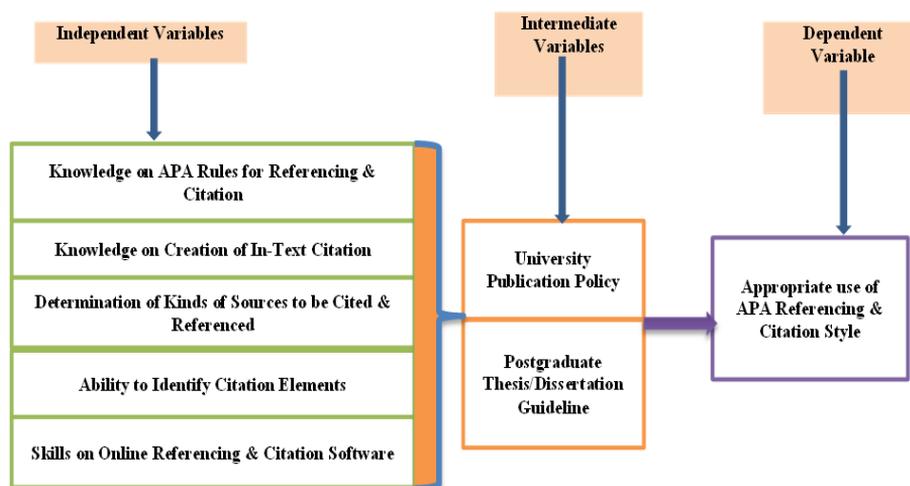
helps manual recording of bibliographic information and then copying the information of sources used in the research process. Not only that but also, it helps in acknowledging someone's ideas and works and avoids serious academic dishonesty, including plagiarism and violation of copyrights, thus boosting up academic integrity of authors and institutions to which they are affiliated to.

### ***Roles of the librarian in improving referencing and citation***

Librarians are often generalists rather than specialists, although subject librarians tend to work more specifically with staff and students in particular disciplines. Consequently, the role of assisting students to develop their capabilities in referencing and citing has become both shared responsibility and an increasingly grey area for both faculty staff and those providing centralised services for students (Marsh & Campion, 2018). Librarians have a role to play in improving citation and referencing. Librarians foster critical and technological literacies in research and education (Havemann & Mackinnon, 2002). In addition to responding to reference desk and online inquiries, librarians offer discipline-specific research skills and co-teach online legal research skills. Librarians provide advice and assistance to students by performing both immediate and reference and in-depth research for their academic works. In other parts of the world, online citation and reference management software manuals are linked to the university websites and they have also created a special unit responsible for citation and reference management in their libraries (Sarrafzadeh & Khaleghi, 2017). This is contrary to the situation in Tanzania where citation and reference management software pieces of training are in a limited form and no specific profession is there to address it.

### **Conceptual Framework**

This study is guided by a conceptual framework designed by researchers. The conceptual framework assumes that the appropriate use of APA citation and referencing style (dependent variables) is a result of five interrelated independent variables with the intermediate variables (See Figure.1).



**Figure 1: A study conceptual framework**  
**Source: Researchers' Construct (2022)**

### **Methodology**

This study employed a cross-sectional research design, which enables data to be collected at a single point in time. It also used a mixed approach in data collection. The mixed approach entails conducting research that involves collecting, analysing and integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches on the same topic (Cresswell, 2013). Postgraduate dissertations uploaded in the MUIR for a period of seven years that is between the years 2013 to 2019 formed a unit of analysis for content analysis. This referenced period of time from 2013 through 2019 was purposively selected because this is the period in which milestone achievements and important events were marked in the history of the IR platform at MU. The year 2013 was selected because it was the time when the IR platform was established by the University for uploading her scholarly works for visibility. Likewise, 2019 was purposively selected because it was the year when there was a temporary pause to upload scholarly works in the MUIR for monitoring and evaluation of related issues. The sample size of 128 dissertations was drawn from a population of 1056 dissertations uploaded in the MUIR (<http://scholar.mzumbe.ac.tz>) between 2013 to 2019. This sample size was 12.12 per cent of the population of the dissertations uploaded in the MUIR for seven years. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2011), a sample size between 10% and 25% is recommended as an acceptable one when determining sample size in content analysis.

Using a purposive sampling strategy, data for this study were obtained from two faculties and one school which were involved in this study. The study picked 18 (14.1%) dissertations from the Faculty of Social Sciences (FSS), 48 (37.5%) dissertations from the School of Public Administration and Management (SOPAM) and 62 (48.4%) dissertations drawn from the School of Business (SoB) (See Table 1). These schools and faculty were purposively selected for inclusion in this study because of their long experiences in offering postgraduate studies. On the other hand, other faculties, institutes and directorates such as the Faculty of Law (FoL), Faculty of Science and Technology (FST), Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and the Library Services Directorate (LSD) were excluded from this study for various reasons as follows. One, the APA style does not conform to the discipline of law. Two, postgraduate programmes in FST and IDS in the year 2013 were not established or they were at an infant stage to warrant the availability of an adequate number of dissertations in the MUIR. Similarly, LSD does not offer any academic programme thus making it less than ideal to be included in this study.

All dissertations selected for this study are publicly available online at <http://scholar.mzumbe.ac.tz/> . Each of the 128 dissertations was evaluated and analysed based on the following elements: Author - Who?, Date - When?, Title - What?, Source - Where?

**Table 1: Distribution of sample sizes across schools/and faculty**

S / n	Faculty/School	Total No.of Dissertations	Sample size Selected	Percentage
1	FSS	145	18	14.1%
2	SOPAM	389	48	37.5%
3	SoB	522	62	48.4%
<b>Total</b>		<b>1056</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** <http://scholar.mzumbe.ac.tz/> / March, Wednesday 30, 2022.

The study also involved face-to-face interviews with five purposively selected postgraduate students and three lecturers drawn from two schools and one faculty. Discourse Based Interviews (DBIs) were used to extract information from the eight respondents. According to Jomaa and Bidin (2017), these types of interviews are an effective research methodology that is used to explore writing choices in the performance of writers towards their works. Microsoft Spreadsheet was used to analyse quantitative data while qualitative data were analysed through content analysis procedures.

## **Results and Discussions**

The findings in Table 2 indicate that in the year 2013 there were 78 (61%) dissertations, 2014 had 8 (6%), 2015 had 16 (12.5%) dissertations, 2016 had 4 (3%) dissertations, 2017 had 6 (5%), 2018 had 4 (3%) dissertations and in 2019 there were 12 (9.4%) dissertations. There were many dissertations in the MUIR in 2013 because it was the time at which the contents were uploaded to the MUIR for the first time after the establishment of the IR platform. Hence, much attention was paid to populating the IR platform in 2013 using postgraduate dissertations which were produced in previous years.

**Table 2: Distribution of dissertations uploaded in the MUIR between 2013 and 2019**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of dissertations (n=128)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
2013	78	61.0
2014	8	6.0
2015	16	12.5
2016	4	3.0
2017	6	5.0
2018	4	3.0
2019	12	9.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** <http://scholar.mzumbe.ac.tz/> (2022).

### ***Postgraduate student's adherence to APA style when writing dissertations***

The first specific objective of this study was to examine the extent to which postgraduate students adhered to APA in-text citation style in their dissertations (See Table 3). To achieve this, 128 dissertations uploaded in the MUIR were selected for content analysis.

**Table 3: Level of adherence to APA style in-text citations**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Level of adherence to APA style</b>	<b>No.of publication</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	Adhered to in-text citation APA style	70	54.6875
2	None adherence to in-text citation APA style	58	45.3125
	<b>Total</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Data (2022)**

The findings show that a total of 70; 54.7 per cent of dissertations uploaded in the MUIR for the year 2013 to 2019 adhered to APA in-text citation style

guidelines whereas 58; 45.3 per cent of dissertations did not adhere to APA guidelines at all (See Table 3).

An in-depth interview was carried out with one of the postgraduate student respondents to get their views for non-adhering to the APA style. The respondent had the following remarks:

*...Poor adherence to the APA citation and referencing style is caused by a lack of seriousness from the side of students who rush to complete their work without bothering on the need to follow the guidelines. Furthermore, students lack proper guidance from their lecturers as well as dissertation supervisors. Sometimes our supervisors concentrate much on other contents of our work and they pay little attention to citations and referencing style (FSS Postgraduate student, April 2022).*

Another in-depth interview was carried out to find out why postgraduate students are less competent in using the APA style. The responses are as follows:

*...Poor referencing and citation is caused by poor prior knowledge on referencing, citation and poor research habits. Our lecturers have wrong conceptions when they assume that students are already vested with skills in citations and referencing before joining postgraduate studies because there are very few institutions that seriously teach citations and referencing to undergraduate students (SoB Postgraduate Student, April 2022).*

The findings corroborate Madhusudhan (2016) who posits that many students come to universities with little skills or a low understanding of citation and referencing style formats. Consequently, they make a lot of errors in their academic writings. An in-depth interview with a SOPAM postgraduate student yielded the following comments:

*...Postgraduate students' supervisors do not pay much attention to citations and references written in postgraduates' dissertations. Also dissertations external examiners have a tendency of ignoring referencing style used. With these shortfalls, one should not expect postgraduate students to pay prerequisite attention to the citation and referencing style in their academic writings.*

One lecturer was of the view that: ...Poor citations and referencing are caused by poor use or inability to subscribe to the reference management tools such as Zotero, Mendel and Endnote by student (Lecturer, April 2022).

A total of five MU postgraduate research method course outlines were reviewed to ascertain whether they had contents on citations and referencing styles. The findings indicated that only one-course outline named PUB 620 had a sub-topic on a bibliography but the depth of coverage was not also shown. The rest of the courses did not indicate any topic or sub-topic on referencing, citations, or any idea of inviting resource persons like librarians to assist on the issue. In some universities, librarians are normally invited as guest speakers to train students on how to go about referencing and citation issues. Surprisingly, at MU no course outline has such a method of delivery (See Table 4).

**Table 4: Selected MU research method course outlines**

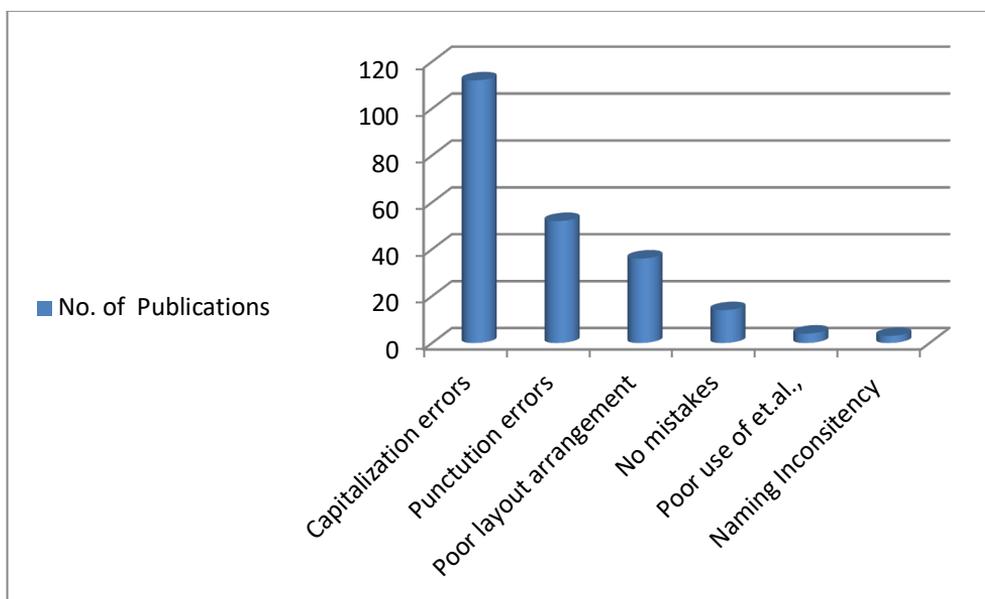
S/N	Course nomenclature	Course Code	Faculty/School/Institute	Librarians Involvement	Observation
1	Research Methods in Education	EDU 602	FSS	Nil	No, any topic on referencing & Citation
2	Social Science Research in Development Studies	DST 680	IDS	Nil	No, any topic on referencing & Citation
3	Business Research Methods	BUS 5032	SoB	Nil	No topic on referencing & Citation
4	Social Science Research Methods	PUB 620	SoPAM	Nil	Has a sub-topic in the bibliography. However, the extent of coverage has not been shown.
5	Advanced Qualitative Methods for Public Policy	C1	SoPAM	Nil	No, any topic on referencing & Citation

**Source: Field Data (2022)**

These findings imply that there is a need for the inclusion of referencing and citation topics in research method courses offered at MU. The MU librarians should take the responsibility of arranging for library users' training on referencing and citation styles.

### ***Common errors committed by postgraduate students when using APA referencing style***

The second specific objective of this study was to identify common errors which are normally committed by postgraduate students in listing references using the APA style. There are several common errors involved; they include such errors as poor insertion of punctuation marks, capitalisation errors, poor layout arrangements, misinformation about some authors and publishers and improper usage of *et al.* (See Figure 2).



**Figure 2: Common errors in listing references**

Source: Field Data (2022)

### ***Capitalisation errors***

The findings show that a large number (112; 90.3%) of dissertations drawn from MUIR between 2013 to 2019 contained obvious capitalisation errors. This is an indication that the majority of postgraduate students committed capitalisation errors when listing references in their dissertations. APA style uses two kinds of capitalisation to format reference titles, title case and sentence case. APA title case refers to the capitalisation style in which most words are capitalised while sentence case refers to a capitalisation style in which most words are lowercase. Title case is used for titles of references when they appear in the text of an APA paper. In contrast, sentence case is used for titles of references when they appear in reference list entities (Lee, 2012). Capitalisation errors appear in reference lists

of dissertations because most postgraduates are not aware of the capitalisation format used in APA style when listing references. It is important to be aware of capitalisation rules and be careful to capitalise words that should be capitalised such as names, countries, proper nouns and the first word at the beginning of any sentence and not otherwise. The findings in this study indicate that most postgraduate students capitalised every word included in the titles of the sources they referenced.

### ***Punctuation errors***

Findings show that slightly less than half (52; 42%) of the authors of dissertations in the MUIR failed to insert proper punctuation marks in their reference lists. Skimming exercise to these dissertations indicates that there was incorrect use of the period, comma, semi-colon, or colons which consequently made the whole reference list completely wrong. Some postgraduate students used more than one punctuation mark at the same time. For instance, for the title that ends with a question mark, they do not need a full stop but in some dissertations, they inserted periods after writing a title ending with a question mark. In some dissertations, a period (.) was inserted after the author's name. Authors are individuals whose names are listed in the format of surname and first initials. Initials naturally include punctuation that is period (.). However, some postgraduate students did not insert the period (.) after the author's surname and first initials. Improper use of comma was also observed. Students inserted a comma (,) after the year of publication instead of using a period (.). In addition, students tended to confuse punctuation marks to be used at a specific place and end up punctuating them incorrectly. This might have been caused by the lack of seriousness on the side of students in adhering to the publication guidelines.

### ***Poor layout arrangements***

Findings indicate that slightly more than a quarter (36; 29%) of the dissertations uploaded in the MUIR for the said period of the study had poor layout arrangements. Each entry in the reference list must have a hanging indent so that the first line of the entry flushes with the left margin, but all other lines are indented. However, this was not the case with the dissertations found in the MUIR as some of the dissertations had reference structure errors which ended up having some faulty arrangements (See Examples 1 & 2).

**Example: 1**

Bennett, S., Creese, A., Monasch, R. (1998). Health insurance schemes for people outside formal sector employment (ARA Paper No. 16). Geneva: World Health Organisation.

**Example: 2**

Neo, M et al. (2000). Human Resource Management: Gaining Competitive Advantage, 3rd ed. Boston, McGraw-Hill

Furthermore, some dissertations did not follow the layout of listing references in APA style where they started with the authors' name, year of publication, the title of the source, edition, publisher then place of publication. Normally the place of publication is supposed to start before the publisher's name (See Example 3).

**Example 3**

Martin, K, (2004). Consumer Behavior (second edition), New Age International (p) Ltd Publishers, New Delhi.

Other errors which were found committed in the MUIR uploaded dissertations include improper use of *et al.* and failure to indicate publishers' and authors' name initials. *Et al.* is used when one has multiple authors for a source. However, *et al.* is not just used every time one has more than one author. In one of the dissertations, it was found that *et al.* was not used when it was necessarily needed to do so (See Example 4).

**Example 4**

Barnett, M., Lord, C., Strauss, E., Rosca, C., Langford, H., Chavez, D. & Deni, L. (2006). Using the urban environment to engage youths in urban ecology field studies. *The journal of environmental education*, 37 (2), 3-11.

In this case, there are 7 authors in this reference material. APA referencing style mandates that 5 authors' names should have been written followed by the word *et al.* to save space in the reference list. Betts (2020) reported that errors committed by students in referencing include incorrect use of *et al.*, not including authors' initials and improper use of punctuation marks. In other dissertations, publishers' names in some of their references in reference lists went missing. References should have the name of publishers responsible for publishing sources cited in the research. This might be attributed to the author's inability to locate and identify publishers of a certain source used (See Example 5).

**Example 5:**

Kothari, C. R (2006). Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition, New Delhi, India

In the listed references, the name of the author is supposed to start with the surname followed by first name initials but for some dissertations. This format was not adhered to and instead the whole names of the authors without using the initials were written (See Examples 6 & 7).

**Example 6**

Conner Brannen, (2010). An Impact Study of the Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA) Program in Zanzibar, Tanzania. [Unpublished Master of Arts in Economic thesis]. Mzumbe University

**Example 7**

Ezra Anyango (2007). Village Savings and Loan Associations in Zanzibar, Tanzania. [Unpublished Master of Arts in Economic thesis].

***Improving citation and referencing by postgraduate students at Mzumbe University***

In-depth interviews were carried out to heed recommendations for improving students' ability to adhere to the APA citations and referencing style. One postgraduate respondent replied: "...Mzumbe University should conduct regular pieces of training aimed at helping us to know how to cite and list references properly using APA referencing style in our academic writings"

**(Postgraduate student responses from FSS, April 2022)**

Another respondent was quoted as saying: "... Lecturers should mark references listed in academic works when they supervise and guide supervisees on how to make citations and write references properly by following all rules and guidelines altogether." **(Responses from SoB Lecturer, April 2022)**

Another lecturer emphasised that: "... Mzumbe University should establish courses that will teach our postgraduate students about referencing and citations using APA referencing style during the first semester of each academic year. This will equip our graduates with the necessary skills to become good writers of scholarly works." **(Response from SoPAM Lecturer, April 2022)**

On the other hand, only 14(11.3%) of all dissertations uploaded in the MUIR for the period of seven years were not found to have committed common errors in

the list of references. This is equivalent to only 2 (1.6%) of all dissertations uploaded in the MUIR per year. Perhaps, this is attributed to the efforts of the authors of these publications aimed at ensuring they seriously adhered to the set publication guidelines for ensuring good quality publications are produced by University postgraduate students to the MUIR.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to examine postgraduates' level of adherence to APA referencing and citation style at MU. The study has shown that postgraduate students' level of adherence to the APA style is yet to meet the APA guidelines and set rules. Thus, more efforts aimed at providing citation instructions to all postgraduate students at MU are highly needed to promote better citation behaviour and lessen academic crime incidences. Poor citations and academic crimes will consequently obstruct the visibility and tarnish the image of the authors as well as that of the University.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusions made in this study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. MU needs to plan for more advanced training for postgraduate students on referencing using the APA style.
- ii. MU should introduce compulsory courses that focus on citation and referencing style meanwhile making emphasis on the APA style. These courses should be taught in the first semester of postgraduate studies.
- iii. MU postgraduate students' lecturers should invite librarians as guest speakers in classes to train students on how to make in-text citations and how to prepare a list of references and cite using APA referencing style.
- iv. Lecturers and supervisors at MU should show the importance of using the APA referencing style by paying much attention to students' academic writings.
- v. The need for collaboration between lecturers and librarians is of particular importance. Their collaboration can enhance better referencing and citations in the students' academic writings.
- vi. There is a need to organise workshops for postgraduate students during their second year on how to cite references. Besides librarians are required to establish a course or a module devoted to citations and referencing and they can also create a LibGuide devoted to common errors in APA citations and references.

- vii. Universities should subscribe to reference management tools such as Mendel, Endnote and Zotero. They should also employ efforts to ensure students can use them in their academic writings.
- viii. Postgraduate students at MU should be keen on adhering to the set guidelines when preparing their dissertations/theses.

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