



Understanding Plagiarism: Essential Insights for Research Scholars

Muneeb Mushtaq Rather

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9509-1376>

Corresponding author for this work

Department of Higher Education

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Abstract

Plagiarism is commonly found in the research work of scholars. It occurs when researchers use someone else's ideas or words in their dissertations, projects, or theses without providing proper citation. To prevent plagiarism, it is important to raise awareness among research scholars. This paper provides an overview of plagiarism, including its definition, various types, methods of detection and prevention, and how to avoid it. Additionally, it discusses effective plagiarism detection tools that help determine the authenticity of the work and identify any unoriginal or unethical content.

Keywords: Plagiarism, Research scholar, academic integrity, plagiarism consequences, plagiarism detection tools

I. INTRODUCTION

The word "plagiarism" originates from the Latin term *plagiare*, meaning "to kidnap" (Oxford English Dictionary). Plagiarism is considered a serious offense and is illegal. While it is often thought of as copying or using another person's original work, such terms can downplay its severity. In reality, plagiarism involves presenting someone else's ideas or words as your own, which amounts to intellectual theft. It is defined as using another individual's work without giving them proper credit. To avoid plagiarism, it is essential to use quotation marks for direct quotes, acknowledge the original sources, and provide appropriate citations—even when paraphrasing someone else's ideas.

History of plagiarism

The word "plagiarism" has roots in both Greek and Latin. The Greek term *πλάγιος* (*plagios*) was used metaphorically to mean deceitful or dishonest (Lidell and Scott, 1940), while the Latin *plagiarius* translates to "kidnapper, seducer, or plunderer" (Harper, 2001). The Roman poet Martial was one of the earliest to use the term, accusing Fidentinus in the first century of copying his poetry

without giving proper credit (Lubell, 2020). The term evolved over time, appearing in Middle French as *plagiaire* in the mid-1500s. Early English usage includes terms like *plagiarie* (1598, Virgideciarum), *plagium* (around 1620, Fotherby), and *plagiarisme* (1621, Montagu) (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023). By the 18th century, the modern form plagiarism had become established, defined as "the act or practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and presenting them as one's own—essentially, literary theft" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023).

By the early 19th century, the concept of plagiarism and related laws were quite similar to today's understanding. Even the use of footnotes closely resembled modern citation practices. However, one significant change over time has been the enforcement of copyright laws across international borders. While most European nations formed agreements to address book piracy, the United States stood apart, offering no protection to foreign authors and publishers until 1891. It wasn't until 1988 that the U.S. finally joined the Berne Convention for the protection of literary and artistic works.

Definition of Plagiarism

According to Webster's Dictionary, a plagiarist is defined as someone who copies or takes another person's words, work, or ideas and presents them as their own—essentially, a literary thief. Plagiarism, on the other hand, is described as the act of using someone else's words or ideas without acknowledgment, as though they were original.

Common Knowledge

Plagiarism is distinct from common knowledge, which refers to information widely known or accepted by most people—such as the fact that the sky is blue or that William Shakespeare authored *Hamlet*. In contrast, using a quote from Mahatma Gandhi without proper attribution would



be considered plagiarism, as it involves presenting someone else's specific words or ideas as your own.

Changes over Time

The understanding of plagiarism has evolved over time. In the past, imitation and reproduction were often viewed as compliments rather than misconduct. In music, for instance, borrowing themes from another composer was considered a gesture of respect and acknowledgment of influence. Similarly, William Shakespeare drew inspiration from existing works, just as later writers borrowed from his plays (Thomas, 2000). During that era, reputation and honor held more significance than intellectual ownership—authors were more concerned about false attribution than about others using their work (Thomas, 2000).

The emergence of the term "plagiarism" is closely linked to the invention of the printing press in the 16th century, which allowed authors to reproduce and widely distribute their works. This period also saw the rise of the merchant class, leading more individuals to earn income from creative work rather than subsistence living (Vint, 2008; Hansen, 2003). These developments align with the economic principle of private property—the idea that ownership enables profit, and profit provides motivation for investment. Intellectual property extends this notion, asserting that individuals have the right to benefit financially from their intellectual efforts, just as they do from physical labor.

Copyright

These technological and cultural changes led to the introduction of the first copyright law in England in 1710, followed by a similar law in the United States in 1790. As a result, the idea of intellectual theft, or plagiarism, became closely linked with the concept of copyright. Copyright is defined as "the right of a creator to maintain exclusive control over the reproduction, publication, and use of their creative work in various forms such as print, video, film, or other media" (World of Criminal Justice, 2002, copyright). In other words, individuals have the right to their intellectual creations, including the right to copy, distribute, and profit from them. While plagiarism is generally considered an ethical violation, copyright infringement is a legal issue. For example, one can violate copyright law by reproducing or distributing someone else's work without permission, but avoid plagiarism by properly attributing it. It's also possible to plagiarize an idea, sentence, or graphic

by failing to credit the original creator without breaching copyright law. In some cases, both copyright and plagiarism can be violated, such as when someone reprints and sells a copyrighted book as their own work. Plagiarism is broader than copyright because it doesn't require financial gain; simply using someone else's work without acknowledgment is enough to constitute plagiarism.

The Prevalence of Plagiarism

Prevalence of Plagiarism in IJES

In December 2009, the editorial board of IJES decided to prescreen all submitted manuscripts for originality before they were sent for peer review. This new procedure was implemented to guarantee that only high-quality, original works would be published. However, since introducing this additional step in the review process, an unexpected trend has emerged. As of December 2009, 46% of the manuscripts submitted to IJES have been found to contain some form of plagiarism.

The distribution is as follows:

- 30% of the submitted manuscripts contained plagiarism from a prior publication by the senior author.
- 16% of the submitted manuscripts contained plagiarism from another researcher's work or website.**

The introduction and method sections were the most common areas where plagiarized content was found. Only 3% of the submitted manuscripts had plagiarism in the discussion section.

When a manuscript is found to be plagiarized, the pre-review editor sends a rejection notice to the authors. This email highlights concerns about the originality of the work and provides a list of the top three sources that were plagiarized. The email concludes with an invitation for the authors to revise the manuscript thoroughly to ensure originality and to resubmit it in the future.

In most cases, the pre-review editor helped the student or professional authors identify and remove specific plagiarized statements.

Factors of Plagiarism

Plagiarism occurs when someone uses someone else's work, ideas, or intellectual property without proper acknowledgment, presenting it as their own. There are several factors that can contribute to plagiarism, whether intentional or unintentional:

1. Lack of Awareness or Understanding

Many students and individuals, especially those new to academic or professional settings, may not fully understand what constitutes plagiarism or the



seriousness of it. This lack of awareness can result in unintentional plagiarism.

2. Time Pressure and Deadlines

Deadlines or tight schedules may encourage people to take shortcuts. Some may feel tempted to copy and paste content without proper citation to meet deadlines.

3. Poor Citation Practices

Improper or incomplete citation of sources can lead to plagiarism, even if the act wasn't intentional. Individuals may forget to cite sources, or they may not know how to cite them properly, especially when using more complex citation styles.

4. Easy Access to Online Resources

The internet provides easy access to a vast amount of information. Sometimes people take advantage of this by copying text directly from websites, articles, or academic papers without crediting the original authors.

5. Cultural Factors

In some cultures or educational systems, borrowing ideas and content is more common, and the concept of intellectual property may not be as strongly emphasized. This can lead to unintentional plagiarism when individuals from these cultures work in environments where strict originality is expected.

6. Misunderstanding of Paraphrasing

Some individuals may believe that changing a few words or rearranging sentences is enough to avoid plagiarism. However, proper paraphrasing involves more than just rewording; it requires a full understanding of the source material and often requires citing the original author.

7. Intentional Plagiarism

In some cases, plagiarism is done deliberately. This could be for academic or professional gain, such as trying to achieve a higher grade, make a project seem more impressive, or save time.

8. Self-Plagiarism

This occurs when someone reuses their previous work (e.g., a paper, article, or report) without proper citation, typically in a different context or for a different assignment, presenting it as new work.

9. Lack of Writing Skills

Individuals with poor writing skills may plagiarize because they feel incapable of expressing their thoughts and ideas without resorting to someone else's work. They might not know how to effectively paraphrase or cite sources.

10. Inadequate Research or Critical Thinking

When someone fails to conduct original research or engage deeply with a topic, they might be more inclined to copy or replicate others' work. They may

lack the critical thinking skills to synthesize information and produce their own ideas.

11. Over-Reliance on Secondary Sources

When relying too heavily on secondary sources (such as summaries or articles summarizing primary research), individuals may end up using others' interpretations or findings without properly acknowledging them.

Addressing these factors requires a combination of education, better citation practices, time management skills, and a culture that values academic integrity.

Types of Plagiarism

Plagiarism can take many forms, ranging from intentional copying to more subtle forms of misrepresentation. Here are some of the main types of plagiarism:

1. **Direct Plagiarism:** This is the most straightforward type. It involves copying someone else's work or ideas word-for-word without attribution, presenting it as your own.

2. **Self-Plagiarism:** This occurs when an individual reuses their own previous work or parts of it in a new context without proper citation, as though it's new and original.

3. **Mosaic Plagiarism (or Patch writing):** In this type, a person takes phrases, sentences, or sections from different sources and combines them into their own work, often without proper citations. It's a mix of original and borrowed content that isn't properly credited.

4. **Paraphrasing Plagiarism:** This happens when someone paraphrases another person's ideas or work but does not credit the source, essentially presenting the paraphrase as their own.

5. **Accidental Plagiarism:** This type happens unintentionally. It can occur if someone fails to cite sources properly, forgets to give credit, or doesn't realize the proper citation standards.

6. **Improper Citation:** This is when someone cites sources incorrectly or uses fake references in an attempt to make their work look more credible. It can also involve using the wrong style of citation or altering citation details.

7. **Complete Plagiarism:** This involves stealing a whole paper or project from someone else and submitting it as your own without any modifications.

8. **Collaborative Plagiarism:** This occurs when multiple people work together and then present the resulting work as an individual's own without acknowledging the contributions of others. Each of these types of plagiarism can be damaging to a person's academic or professional integrity and is considered unethical.



Reason for plagiarism

Retraction in various fields, such as academic research, publishing, and legal contexts, can happen for several reasons. Here are some common ones:

1. Research Misconduct

Data Fabrication or Falsification: When data or results are made up, altered, or manipulated to fit a hypothesis or desired outcome.

Plagiarism: Using someone else's work or ideas without proper citation.

Duplicate Publication: Publishing the same research findings in multiple journals without proper disclosure.

Improper Authorship: Listing authors who did not contribute significantly to the work, or omitting those who did.

2. Methodological Errors

Incorrect or Flawed Methodology: When the methods used in the research are found to be inappropriate or incorrect, which undermines the validity of the conclusions.

Sample Size or Data Collection Issues: Errors in how data was collected, analyzed, or insufficient sample size can lead to unreliable results.

3. Conflicts of Interest

If there is a failure to disclose conflicts of interest (financial or personal relationships that could affect the integrity of the research), the results may be seen as biased.

4. Ethical Violations

Violation of Ethical Guidelines: This can include failure to obtain informed consent from participants in studies, or not following the ethical protocols required in a specific field of research.

Human or Animal Rights Violations: If the research has harmed participants or animals in ways that violate ethical guidelines.

5. Errors in Peer Review

Reviewer Oversight: Sometimes, a study might pass through peer review with errors that go unnoticed until after publication.

Bias or Unfair Review Process: If the peer review process is biased or not conducted properly, the article might need to be retracted.

6. Legal Reasons

Defamation or Libel: If the content in the publication defames a person or an entity, it may be retracted.

Violation of Copyright: If the publication uses copyrighted material without permission or proper licensing.

7. Fraud or Deceptive Practices

If any part of the publication (e.g., authorship, peer review process, findings) is found to be fraudulent or intentionally deceptive.

8. Other Unforeseen Factors

Reproducibility Issues: If other researchers cannot replicate the results due to undisclosed conditions, leading to the publication being retracted.

External Pressures: In some cases, retractions occur due to external pressure from funding organizations, institutions, or even political entities. A retraction is a formal acknowledgment that the published work is no longer valid, often due to issues like these.

Detecting Plagiarism

Detecting plagiarism typically involves comparing a piece of content against other sources to identify whether any part of it has been copied or closely mimicked. Here are some common methods for detecting plagiarism:

1. Manual Comparison

Checking Similarity: One way is to manually search for phrases or sections of text that seem unusual or overly specific, then search them in search engines to see if they appear in other places.

2. Plagiarism Detection Software

Turnitin: This software is widely used by educational institutions to check for similarity in written content.

Copyscape: A tool that checks whether content on a website has been copied from another website.

Grammarly: Includes a plagiarism checker as part of its premium service, scanning content against billions of web pages.

Quetext: Offers plagiarism detection with both free and paid versions.

Plagscan: A professional plagiarism detection tool often used by universities and organizations.

3. Text-Matching Algorithms

Fingerprinting: This method creates a "fingerprint" of the content and compares it against other known fingerprints. It helps detect even paraphrased content.

Latent Semantic Analysis (LSA): LSA looks at the meaning of words and context, not just the exact text. This helps detect cases where the content is rephrased to avoid detection.

4. Cross-referencing Sources

By checking references and citations, you can verify whether the proper attribution has been given. In cases where no citations are provided, it could be a sign of plagiarism.

Is plagiarism a crime?

If you resort to plagiarism, you're only deceiving yourself. It prevents you from learning how to articulate your thoughts in your own words and robs you of constructive, personalized feedback that could help you grow. Plagiarizing is like letting a



friend practice tennis for you—don't expect to hit an ace when it really counts.

Legally, plagiarism isn't a criminal offense unless the copied work is used for financial gain. In most cases, the issue is handled in civil court, where the original creator can seek damages or file a copyright infringement claim. The level of penalty depends on how much harm the original creator suffers. The harshest consequences typically involve trademark infringement or falsely presenting copied art as original work.

Levels of Plagiarism in non-core areas

In all non-essential cases, plagiarism can be categorized by severity based on the percentage of similarity, as follows:

- Up to 10% similarity – not considered plagiarism
- More than 10% but up to 40% – low level
- More than 40% but up to 60% – moderate level
- Over 60% similarity – high level

Recommendations for Student Authors

Plagiarism may occur either intentionally or unintentionally; however, the reason behind it is irrelevant, as both forms compromise the credibility of the research process. It's common for first-time authors to unintentionally plagiarize by copying exact sentences from published works instead of rephrasing the content in their own words. Here are a few examples:

- **Published Statement:** Regular Exercise has a number of health benefits, which can lead an improved quality of life.
- **Plagiarized Version:** Exercise Training has a number of health benefits, leading to improved quality of life. (11 of 16 plagiarized words, 68.7% plagiarized)
- **Properly Rewritten:** It is well documented that regular physical activity can lower fasting cholesterol and glucose, which may reduce morbidity. (0 of 16 plagiarized words, 0% plagiarized).
- The best way to prevent plagiarism is to resist the urge to copy text from existing publications with the intention of editing it later. Although this approach might make it easier to begin writing, it can lead to issues with originality if you forget to revise the copied content afterward. It is very important that you work closely with your faculty mentor to produce a high-quality, original manuscript that is worth publishing.

Recommendations for Faculty Mentors

- In order to maintain the integrity of the research process, supervising (or senior) Faculty members should thoroughly review all student manuscripts before they are submitted for peer review. It's equally important that instructors emphasize the need to avoid plagiarism, encouraging students to produce original work that reflects their own ideas, supported by relevant literature. Since many universities provide access to plagiarism detection tools (such as Turnitin), it's recommended to use these tools to check for originality and address any issues before submission.

II. CONCLUSION

Although plagiarism has existed since ancient times, it has never been as widespread as it is today. The rapid expansion of the internet has significantly contributed to the increase in plagiarism cases. In fact, modern digital tools have made it easier to misuse others' work, often unintentionally, and have made detecting these new forms of plagiarism more challenging. This unethical practice has become so prevalent that its damaging and corrupting effects are evident across various fields. Therefore, stronger efforts are necessary to address and prevent plagiarism.

To tackle plagiarism, a range of strategies have been intensified, with many relying on software-based solutions. Interestingly, this highlights a paradox—information technology serves as both the root cause and the remedy for the issue of plagiarism. The editorial board hopes that these initiatives will encourage students to produce original articles, not only for IJES but also for other scholarly journals within the field of exercise science.

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