Plagiarism in research: A basic introduction

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Abstract

Research is a very systematic process wherein all the activities are carried out in a very systematic manner in order to find solutions of problem. It should be an original work on the part of the researcher. But, sometimes, it is seen that some people do use other authors' ideas, thoughts, expressions or wordings into their texts without giving them proper acknowledgement and credit which falls under the act of plagiarism. It is pivotal to give acknowledgment and credit to the original authors while using their ideas, thoughts, expressions or wordings into the new texts. In this article, the meaning of plagiarism, its important definitions, characteristics, types, reasons of doing plagiarism, the UGC's regulations regarding plagiarism and lastly, the ways to be followed in order to avoid plagiarism have been discussed elaborately in a very systematic manner. This paper may help one to understand the broad concept of plagiarism efficiently so that he/she is able to produce quality research work without doing plagiarism.

Keywords: Plagiarism; Higher education; UGC Regulartions for plagiarism

Introduction

In the era of advanced science and technology, from teachers to students, every stakeholder involved in academia uses the internet to get their academic issues addressed. Because, over the internet, a plethora of learning resources are available in multimodal forms, be they texts, images, or videos. These resources are regarded as very necessary and helpful for the stakeholders to use in order to learn subjects in an effective manner and forge their knowledge. It aids both teachers and students considerably in accomplishing academic tasks efficiently. For example, teachers, in general, take advantage of these learning resources to build up their knowledge on various subject matters, write academic articles, and spread the learned knowledge to the learner community. Whereas students, in particular, use the available resources to write their academic assignments, which leads to academic success. In relation to this endeavor, a very specific question arises here. The question is: do students properly acknowledge the creators whose original works are used in their academic writings? If they do not give proper acknowledgement, this act will fall under the category of plagiarism. Plagiarism refers to the act of replicating or using another person's concepts, inventions, articulations, and creative works without providing proper acknowledgement (Chamon & Dantas, 2015). In simple words, when a researcher or investigator or a person represents the thoughts, ideas or expressions of another author as his own writing without acknowledging him specifically and properly, this process becomes plagiarism. It is recognized as a sort of intellectual thievery and academic dishonesty. Plagiarism may be voluntary or involuntary (Dawson & Overfield, 2006). A writer does this either consciously or occasionally unconsciously due to a lack of adequate knowledge of the subject.

Plagiarism may be subjected to some kind of sanctions like- penalty, substantial fine, suspension or rejection (Zhang, 2016). Some instances of plagiarism are briefly mentioned below which may be beneficial to comprehend the concept of plagiarism in a feasible manner-

➢ When an individual incorporates a sequence of words without proper quotation marks, that becomes plagiarism.

➢ When an individual paraphrases someone else's work without giving him proper credit.

➢ When an individual uses another author's writings as his own directly while preparing report of any micro or macro research.

➢ When an individual copies another author's innovative ideas, thoughts, expressions or wordings directly in order to make a write up in his own name for getting academic benefits.

Here, it is worthwhile to mention that the act of plagiarism may not be identical in case of every country of the world. It may vary countrywise (Lim, & Nather, 2015). For instance, countries like India and Poland regard plagiarism to be a serious academic offense. It often takes place just because of people's lack of proper knowledge, experiences and skills on various issues. When an individual is caught under plagiarism, he is regarded as an intellectual thief. Therefore, teachers should give students a preliminary description in the classroom so they can understand the concept.

Definitions of Plagiarism

Now-a-days, Plagiarism has become a growing serious issue in the global academic world. It has been able to catch major attention in every sphere of academic world. There are some very important definitions of plagiarism, stated by some of the highly renowned dictionaries which are of the following types:

• The **"Oxford Dictionary of English"** defines plagiarism as- *"the practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own"*. (Oxford Dictionary of English, 2020)

• The **"Merriam Webster Dictionary"** defines plagiarism as- *"to steal and pass off ideas or words of another as one's own"*. (Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2020)

• The **"Cambridge Dictionary"** defines plagiarism as- *"the process or practice of using another person's ideas or work and pretending that it is your own"*. (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020)

From the definitions mentioned above, it can be understood that plagiarism is a sort of unscrupulous exercise of using another person's ideas, thoughts, expressions or wordings in the form of write up without specifically acknowledging him or giving him proper credit. This act may be either planned or accidental. It is, now-a-days, seen as a severe problem in academic publishing which causes withdrawal of research papers.

Characteristics of Plagiarism

➢ Using someone else's ideas, thoughts, expressions or writings as one's own

➢ Copying the writings of another person's without giving him necessary credit

➢ Being unsuccessful to make proper quotations

➢ Mentioning wrong information about the valid sources of knowledge
➢ Paraphrasing someone's original work without acknowledging him
➢ Using his own previous writings of innovative and original works in his next research works without proper acknowledgement
➢ Plagiarism is considered as a severe offense which may lead to a highly negative termination.

Types of Plagiarism

Sometimes, almost every academic writer confronts plagiarism while writing article, research paper, dissertation or thesis. There are 10 types of plagiarism which have been classified by the noted plagiarism checker *Turnitin*. Every academic writer should be well acquainted with them in order to avoid plagiarism while preparing his write up on different issues. The types are briefly discussed as follows-

- **Clone Plagiarism:** Clone plagiarism is also regarded as 'Identical Copying'. In this plagiarism, an academic writer or individual copies everything from another author's original work without changing a single word and claims as his own work. Here, the writer steals all the wordings from the original author's work and writes them in his own write up claiming it as his own which causes clone plagiarism.

- **Remix Plagiarism:** When a writer garners information from multifarious sources and arranges them in a very smooth way in order to create a proper write up, that becomes remix plagiarism. Later on, he claims it as his own.

- **Ctrl+ C Plagiarism:** When an individual copies exact texts from a source (which may be in the form of e-content) by pressing Ctrl+ C switches on the keyboard and pastes them into a new document form by pressing Ctrl+ V switches, that becomes **Ctrl+ C plagiarism**

- **Hybrid plagiarism:** Whean individual copies the properly cited writings and arranges them as a new document without giving specific citation, the act falls under the hybrid plagiarism.

- **Find-Replace Plagiarism:** When an individual only changes the keywords and major phrases while writing a write up and changes nothing at all except them is called find-replace plagiarism.

- **Recycle Plagiarism:** Recycle plagiarism is also regarded as "Self-Plagiarism". When an individual uses his previous writings in order to write a new write up without giving proper citations, that becomes recycle plagiarism.

- **Mashup Plagiarism:** When an individual collects information from multifarious sources in order to make a write up on a specific area and mixes up all the necessary valid information in a smooth manner to give a full shape to it without any proper and specific citation, this is known as mashup plagiarism.

- **404 Error Plagiarism:** Usually, it is seen that many of the students or persons prepare a write up in the form of a new document by gathering important information from various sources and they also give proper citations as well. But, sometimes, they mistakenly give inaccurate citations which often lead to non-existing resources and that is known as 404 error plagiarism.

- **Aggregator Plagiarism:** In aggregator plagiarism, an individual gives all the citations very specifically and properly, but does not create any innovative knowledge which may contribute to new knowledge, that becomes aggregator plagiarism. He only collects information from multifarious sources and rearranges them with proper citations in order to make a complete write up as his own.

- **Re-Tweet Plagiarism:** When an individual gives proper citations while writing a research paper or article, but still the write up gets matched with the original wordings of the native author in some unspecified places, that will be regarded as re-tweet plagiarism.

Reasons of Plagiarism

People (including students) opt for plagiarism for many reasons. Some may opt intentionally and some accidently. Usually plagiarism takes place based on the individual's ignorance towards valid knowledge of the subject matter as well as the outright ignoble desires (Voelker et al., 2012). However, the leading reasons which encourage people to opt for plagiarism are discussed as follows:

- **Individual's Hitch:** When an individual thinks that he is weak in using proper words while writing an article or research paper, he opts to copy the wordings of the contents from various sources and writes them as his own. He thinks that he exactly wants to write the same things, but just because he knows less vocabulary, he prefers copying the wordings of the original authors.

- **Copying from Internet and Pasting It:** An individual copies the necessary contents directly from internet in a hasty situation and pastes them into a new document form in order to prepare a write up as his own and later on, he forgets to give references of the contents which he uses by collecting from various websites or sources.

- **Paraphrasing:** Sometimes, people change some of the words in a paragraph which is genuinely an original write up of another author. By doing so, they start thinking that it is their own write up.

- **Quotation:** Very often, people do forget to use citations or quotations while writing an article or research paper which leads to plagiarism.

- **Thinking Copyright is not Applied to the Web:** Most of the times, people think that everything which is available on internet is free to all for the purpose of use.

- **Effortlessness:** Sometimes, an individual does not try to find out the sources of the contents which he has collected from somewhere in order to make his write up.

- **Procrastination:** When an individual thinks of doing his works later rather than doing at present, he gives chance to procrastination. It leads to negative attitude and hence, affects his behavior negatively. People often thinks of writing references or giving proper citations at the later period of time, but unfortunately ends up forgetting to do so.

- **Lack of Adequate Organization:** When an individual finds lots of information in an unstructured manner, he accidentally does plagiarism while writing his write up, as he does not have adequate information before his hand that from where these all information have been gathered. Sometimes, people find various important write up in

an unstructured manner which even do not contain any page number serially. All these things contribute to plagiarism.

- **Failing to Contemplate Deeply:** While writing an article or research paper, people need to think profoundly in order to make it a good innovative write up. But some people very rarely do think deeply before writing.

- **Feeling Shy to Seek Help:** Most of the times, many people feel shy to ask help from others related to his academic works, for which they opt for plagiarism.

- **Craving to Obtain Good Marks:** Many students copies contents directly from various sources just to make a well standard write up, so that they can be able to get good grades in their academic careers.

- **Fear of Failing:** It is usually seen in every sphere of academic life that many students do copy every word from the valid sources in order to prepare their academic write ups. They do so, just because of fear of failing in the exams.

- **Having Less Interest in the Assignments:** When students have less interest in doing assignments which are not very attractive to them, they simply opt for plagiarism. They just want to submit the assignments to the respective teachers for getting relief from the academic work loads.

- **Believe They will not Get Caught:** Students very often think that they will not be caught under plagiarism if they copy the writings from other sources which are not available in their text books.

- **Lack of Adequate Knowledge on Plagiarism:** As people are not much aware about the rules and regulations of plagiarism, they, sometimes, unintentionally do plagiarism. This is why, it has been very necessary to provide knowledge on the concepts of plagiarism to the students as well as other people who are in touch with the various fields of academic world.

UGC Regulations for Plagiarism

The University Grants Commission (UGC) in its 530th meeting held on 20th March, 2018, in order to check plagiarism and suggest some institutional appointments to curb the extension of this threat in our country's higher education system, has introduced the regulations for the prevention of plagiarism by considering and approving the UGC (Promotion of Academic Integrity and Prevention of Plagiarism in Higher Educational Institutions) Regulations, 2018. The main purpose of introducing UGC Regulations, 2018 was to create awareness among the researchers as well as academic writers regarding the well conduct of research process and research report writing so that the act of plagiarism could be vanished and the constructive knowledge could be attained after doing constructive research (Pandita & Singh, 2019). In this regulation, the UGC has mentioned about the punishments in the form of penalties which are to be given to the people for doing any misconduct in the research process which is often known as plagiarism. The UGC has given its utmost emphasis on the right conduct of research process so that our country can produce quality research outcome in every field. The levels of penalties for the act of plagiarism and their representations have been shown as follows.

Levels of Plagiarism

Plagiarism is quantified into the following levels in ascending order of severity for the purpose of its definition (University Grants Commission Regulations, 2018):

Levels	Representations
Level 0	Up to 10% similarity- No penalty
Level 1	Above 10% to 40 % similarity
Level 2	Above 40% to 60 % similarity
Level 3	Above 60% similarity

Penalties for High Plagiarism

Institutional Academic Integrity Panel (IAIP) imposes penalty considering the severity of the plagiarism in submission of dissertation and thesis (University Grants Commission Regulations, 2018):

Levels	Representations
Level 0	Minor similarity, no penalty
Level 1	To be asked to withdraw the manuscript.
Level 2	• Shall be asked to withdraw the manuscript • Shall be denied a right to one annual increment • To not be allowed to be a supervisor to any new Master's, M.Phil., Ph.D. Students/ scholar for two years
Level 3	• Shall be asked to withdraw the manuscript • Shall be denied a right to two successive annual increments • To not be allowed to be a supervisor to any new Master's, M.Phil., Ph.D. Students/ scholar for three years

In the same way, the quality journals, both national and international, which are Peer-reviewed, UGC-Care listed or Scopus-indexed, set norms and standards regarding plagiarism, so the research articles and review articles, among others, are published plagiarism-free with proper citations.

How to Avoid Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a pervasive issue that is detrimentally impacting the academic and scientific landscape on a global scale. The proliferation of digital material, encompassing many forms of knowledge accessible via the Internet, is often regarded as the primary catalyst for the occurrence of plagiarism. In order to write a research paper or article, an academic writer needs to go through various sources in order to have idea and information regarding the issue. While preparing a write up, he needs to write everything by his own wordings and wherever necessary, give citation or quotation in a proper way. Moreover, he needs to give references as well, as from which sources the additional important information has been taken for preparing the write up. If he fails to do so, he will be caught under the act of plagiarism. Therefore, in order to avoid plagiarism, the academic writer needs to incorporate these things properly into his write up so that it can be free from getting plagiarised. There are some pivotal ways which are to be followed strictly by the academic writer or researcher while

writing a write up as his own which will definitely help him/her in making the write up plagiarism free (Brown & Janssen, 2017; Dhammi & Ul Haq, 2016; Streefkerk, 2019). Those ways are as follows-

➢ When an individual writes an article, book or research paper, he needs to use information into it by collecting from various sources. He may, sometimes, use an original author's ideas, thoughts, expressions or wordings into his write up. Whenever he does so, he must give credit to the original author by giving the necessary details about him and his original works in the reference list or bibliography.

➢ An academic writer or researcher, as much as possible, needs to write everything by using his own words so that the write can be free from plagiarism.

➢ While preparing a write up as his own, an individual must give proper citation and quotation.

➢ He must seek permission from the copyright holder before using his ideas, thoughts, expressions or words into the write up.

➢ He should avoid self-plagiarism as well.

➢ Before submitting his article, research paper, dissertation or thesis, an individual must use plagiarism checker for checking its originality. To check to what extent academic writing is plagiarism-free and remove the plagiarism found, one can use different plagiarism checker tools. These tools are made available freely for use in higher educational institutions.

Conclsuion

plagiarism is a serious ethical violation that undermines the principles of academic and creative integrity. It involves presenting someone else's ideas, words, or work as your own without proper attribution. To avoid plagiarism, individuals should prioritize originality and adhere to citation guidelines. Properly citing sources, using quotation marks for direct quotes, and paraphrasing with accuracy are essential practices. Additionally, cultivating good research and writing habits, along with utilizing plagiarism detection tools, can contribute to maintaining a high standard of intellectual honesty. By fostering a culture of respect for intellectual property, we can uphold the values of education, innovation, and creativity while discouraging the detrimental effects of plagiarism.

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