

PLAGIARISM IN SIMPLE LANGUAGE

If you steal from one author, it is plagiarism; if you steal from many, it is research

—Wilson Mizner

It has been a vital and well-etched principle of scientific publishing that a researcher's past work forms pillars for newer research, thereby, encouraging the use of another's research ideas. The concept is to study others work, find out where are the gaps and then plan a research hypothesis. The methodology may be standardized earlier or new. The ethical tumble comes into play when those ideas are misrepresented as of one's own. As a well-known fact, plagiarism is generally defined as taking another's ideas, images, or words and representing them as one's own. The operational definition of plagiarism as per World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) conveys that repetition of 6 consecutive words or overlapping of 7–11 words in a set of 30 words. It may be deliberately or accidental. But witnessing the current scenario, where science has reached another level with researchers being aware of the ethical aspects of scientific writing, often, plagiarism is more an outcome of scholarly laziness than intellectual treachery. The act of plagiarism is difficult to perceive and poses a great challenge to the editors of any reputed scientific journal. However, through this editorial, the various types of plagiarism are being presented so that it could be avoided while writing a scientific manuscript.

Plagiarism in scientific writing may not possess distinct boundaries but there are distinguished forms of plagiarism such as:

- **Plagiarism of Ideas/ thoughts:** In some instances, ideas, opinions, methodology and results may be included as it is without citing the original source. This may not be intentional in all cases and may be attributed to improper knowledge of quoting citations. So, it is expected to gather thorough knowledge and literature by the authors followed by appropriate citations.
- **Text plagiarism:** The direct copying of the text whether few words, phrases or major part of someone else's work without any acknowledgement or citation is text plagiarism. Such form may be of various subtypes, such as (a) Missing citations—insertion of text, or any other file without citing the original source; (b) Paraplagiarism—addition of other author's text with minute changes or including similar work of various authors without recognizing the primary source. It must be noted that paraphrasing too requires appropriate citation of the original source; (c) Pure/exact copying—in such cases, exact words or phrases are being duplicated even if the source is cited but without using quotation marks. The magnitude of copying from one's text varies greatly and the issue of concern arises about the extent of copying, whether is it only a sentence or more. Greater the copying...severe is the misconduct; (d) Incorrect Paraphrasing—in such cases, small changes may be done to the sentence or phrase, but the main structure of the sentence is kept the same with citation of the primary source.
- **Text plagiarism may also relevant in cases of figures, graphs, clinical pictures and radiographs.** Images in a manuscript play a pivotal role in a scientific research. They add evidence and strength to any publication. But there may be instances, when figure or charts may be copied from the original source without appropriate acknowledgement or paraphrasing of figures or tables. It must be noted that copying of figures may require permission of the authors or the publishers mainly but it is god gifted ability to human race to comprehend and recollect any plagiarized image if seen previously.

Self-plagiarism

"When you use your own work, that is not called stealing", this may be a very common notion believed amongst many authors. However, this is not true. It may be considered as one of the severe forms of ethical misconduct, including previous work and misrepresenting it as new is not acceptable. This may lead to wastage of time of the editor, the reviewers who put their valuable time and efforts in exploring novelty and aptness in any scientific research, and last but not the least, our valuable readers. Self-plagiarism may be described in various forms such as:

- **Duplicate publication:** This refers to publishing the same manuscript with very similar substance to what has been published by the same author. This implies to all the sections in a manuscript like Introduction, Methodology, Results and Discussion. If an old work is a continuation or draws similarity, then it is very important to be cited. Certain copyright issues may also be taken care of while reusing one's own work, for instance, whether such clauses with the previous publisher included freedom of using any part of one's previous work. Also, misconduct may be relevant in cases where the list of authors of the old article do not matches with the new list. If words/phrases are found to be copied from a paper with few different authors, then this may be taken as theft/plagiarism. It is advisable to give suitable credit to any author's previous work.
- **Recycling content:** There may be a scenario where same paper may be published in different journals or in different languages. In this case, a disclaimer is published with intent to inform readers that this particular content is being recycled for the benefit of readers of this journal.

Till date there are no universal regulations been formulated on plagiarism prevention, though regulatory bodies such as Office of Research Integrity (ORI), Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) have issued some guidelines on avoidance of plagiarism. However, the guidelines are only for guiding the profession and there are no legal components as well as penal provisions. The legal provisions and penalties, etc. are to be decided by the institute, university, local administration or sometimes federal Governments. Some of the professional associations also make some guidelines with riders for its members. The Journal Editorial offices and publishing houses can remain vigilant and can raise a flag on such issues if required. However, there is much more to be done to generate awareness among the scientists about plagiarism. Recently, newer terms have been described

by one of the senior editors about the types of plagiarism such as CTRL C, CLONE, REMIX, RECYCLE, MASH UP and RETWEET. For detailed understanding of such terms, our valuable readers are suggested to read the review article quoted below*.

Editors being called the gatekeepers of a scientific platform are expected to keep strong vigil on any form of misconduct in scientific research. Thus, it is the responsibility of the editorial team and reviewers to detect such inappropriate occurrences and act appropriately before publishing any scientific content. We urge our authors to implement strict care in avoiding plagiarism:

- Always acknowledge: An author is expected to recognize other author's/ own previous work and provide citations and quotation marks. Also, in case of doubt, it is advisable to always cite.
- Express in one's own words: Use one's own voice or writing style and avoid paraphrasing.
- Do not duplicate image/ figures or text: Recycling of images and other parts of the manuscript. Whether it is your own previous work or someone else's.
- Seek permission: Permission is mandatory in cases of publishing someone else's images or text or data and thorough attribution to be given to the authors. Also in instances of republishing one's own work, copyright publishing is intended for the same.
- The references used must be uniformly written and must contain accurate bibliographic information.

Since, with the advent of plagiarism detection software and databases, it has become quite easier to detect any form of plagiarism on early stages thus providing sturdy foundation in the field of ever evolving science. However, the best vigilance may be provided by our distinct readers, reviewers and authors themselves.

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