

Plagiarism: An Ethical Issue

Dr. Vivek Kumar Bains, MDS
Managing Editor

This editorial is a brief compilation of available literature to inform our readers about plagiarism. As per Oxford Dictionary, plagiarism is defined as “copying another person’s ideas, words or work and pretend that they are their own.”¹ Plagiarism is considered as an academic misconduct, and therefore, it is always expected that whatever one writes, it must be presented in their own words, generated from their own understanding.² As per Turnitin University Research Resources educational document available online, “Terms like ‘copying’ and ‘borrowing’ can disguise the seriousness of the offense.... Plagiarism is an act of fraud.”³ In general, most people may not be thinking of copyright for an idea conceived. Investigators have emphasized that just like novel inventions, expression of original concepts is an intellectual property and is protected by copyright laws. Changing the words of an original source, while maintaining the original concept without citation, is not sufficient to prevent plagiarism. Acknowledging while giving due credit of the work or idea to the respective author or person, by proper citation and source, and thus in a way accepting that the material or the idea has been borrowed, can prevent plagiarism.³ Scanlon & Neumann⁴ utilized 5-point Likert-type scale that range from 1 (never) to 5 (very frequently) for a survey on internet-plagiarism amongst 698 students who may be engaged in some acts of plagiarism e.g. copying text and inserting it in a paper without citation, copying an entire paper without citation, asking someone to provide them with a paper, using the internet to copy an entire paper without citation, using the internet facility to ask some other person to provide them with a paper, purchasing a paper in a print publication and purchasing a paper from an online term paper mill. They reported that students use internet to copy and paste text into their papers without citation.⁴



Dr. Vivek Kumar Bains completed his graduation (BDS) and postgraduation (MDS) in Periodontology from Government Dental College & Hospital, Patiala, in year 2000 and 2005, respectively. Currently, he is working as Professor in Saraswati Dental College & Hospital, Lucknow (UP), India.

Professor, Department of Peridontology,
Saraswati Dental College, Lucknow-227105, (UP), India.

Address for Correspondence:

Dr. Vivek Kumar Bains, Saraswati Dental College, 233, Tiwari Ganj,
Faizabad Road, Chinhat, Lucknow-227105 (UP), India.
Contact: +91 9935023439, E-mail: doc_vivek76@yahoo.co.in

To avoid plagiarism, authors must first think and understand, not just search and type; secondly, write in their own words to express their understanding, and finally signal clearly whenever someone else’s words are directly quoted using quotation mark or paraphrase and providing complete “reference” or “citation” that tells the reader where quoted material comes from.² Citation i.e. giving credit to the original author by citing sources is the only way to use people’s work without plagiarizing. And proper citation includes the information of the author, the complete title of the work or concept, the name, and location of the company that published the work, the date or code of publication as well as publisher and the page numbers of the material being borrowed.³

A paraphrase may be defined as “a restatement in own words of someone else’s ideas; one must alter both the words and the sentence structure of the original, without changing the content. But these paraphrased passages still necessarily require citation, as the idea came from another source..... In fact, it is advantageous to highlight the fact that you rely on other sources, and using good quality research supporting your ideas. Moreover, good paraphrasing makes the ideas of source fit smoothly into your paper, emphasizing the most relevant points and leaving out unrelated information.”³

Authors often believe that they can reclaim their original work either in full or in excerpts, over and over again.⁵ This is another common mistake by the authors, and is termed as self-plagiarism. To quote, “Self-plagiarism is defined as a type of plagiarism in which writer republishes a work in its entirety or reuses portions of a previously written text while authoring a new work”.⁵ Self-plagiarism is often considered as invasion upon a publisher’s copyright. To quote, “The American Psychological Association differentiates plagiarism from self-plagiarism: whereas plagiarism refers to the practice of claiming credit for the words, ideas, and concepts of others, self-plagiarism refers to the practice of presenting one’s own previously published work as though it were new”.⁵

To combat the concerns related to plagiarism, many efforts have been made. Few of the online plagiarism softwares available at no or minimal cost are DupliChecker, CopyLeaks, PaperRater, Plagiarisma, PlagiarismChecker, Plagium, PlagTracker, Quetext, Viper,⁶ and www.plagiarism-

detector.com.⁷ Ithenticate.com and Grammerly.com are other paid programs that may help authors, researchers and other related persons in plagiarism-free compilation or check the originality of their work. Although, we have such yardsticks, one's own conscience, and personal ethics are far more accountable for taking credit of others as one's own.

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