

## Plagiarism – An Ethical Issue

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### ABSTRACT

Academic dishonesty or plagiarism is a growing problem in to days digital world. This article examines different aspects of plagiarism and introduces students, research scholars to plagiarism, its ill effect and the much more anti-plagiarism software devoted to this important issue. Plagiarism by students and researchers in academic and research institutions is an old activity but ever growing problem. The wide use and availability of electronic resources makes it easy for students, authors and even academic people to access and use any piece of information and embed it into his/her own work without proper citation and has made plagiarism a bigger problem in academia.

This article also elaborate reasons for increase in plagiarism cases, how to avoid plagiarism, pros and cons of plagiarism and prevention. Use of plagiarism detection tools such as Turnitin and Ithenticate can not only prevent but also assist faculty to fight this form of academic dishonesty and accelerate writing skill. In this article various anti-plagiarism tools play an important role and the advantages and disadvantages of using this automated text-matching software are discussed and analysed in brief.

**KEYWORDS:** Academic dishonesty, plagiarism, plagiarism detection tools, anti-plagiarism software, Turnitin, Ithenticate, UGC - Infonet

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### INTRODUCTION

While academic dishonesty is not a new phenomenon, there is no agreement about why plagiarism is so prevalent in the academic world. It is broadly acknowledged that online plagiarism is really high because of the easy availability of information (Mundava, 2007). The exponential growth in scholarly publications makes it harder for faculty and instructor to detect the plagiarised sources. Goggle as today is probably the most popular search engine and an effective tool to detect plagiarism on the Internet. Today editors and reviewers of all scholarly journals look for the following for selection of a paper for its inclusion in a journal:

1. Originality – what is new about subject?
2. Relevance to and extension of existing knowledge

3. Research methodology – are conclusions valid and objective?
4. Clarity, structure and quality of writing – does it communicate well?
5. Sound, logical progression of argument
6. Currency of references
7. Compliance to the editorial scope and objectives of the journal.

The academic honesty has nearly reaching its nadir at a few places. One can benefit from the booming online research paper industry, which, with a click of a mouse and a credit card number, supplies students and researchers with a customised research paper. This can be easily accepted for publication by any journal with high impact factor.

## WHAT IS PLAGIARISM?

Plagiarism (from the Latin ‘plagiare’, meaning ‘to kidnap’) is defined as ‘the appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas and thoughts of another author and representation of them as one’s original work’ (The Random House Dictionary of the English Language).

Plagiarism means putting forth other people’s ideas as ours intentionally or unintentionally. It is important to provide references while writing other people’s ideas.

The rules needed while providing references are as follows:

1. It is important to cite the source.
2. Citing the source clearly and not vaguely.
3. If we copy/paste from another source then that matter has to be put in quotation marks.

## TYPES OF PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism can broadly be classified and distributed as five types (Liles, 2004):

### 1. ‘Copy and paste plagiarism’

‘Any time you lift a sentence or significant phrase intact from a source, you must use quotations marks and reference the source’.

### 2. ‘Word switch plagiarism’

‘If you take a sentence from a source and change around a few words, it is still plagiarism. If you want to quote a sentence, then you need to put it in quotation marks and cite the author and article. But quoting Source articles should only be done if what the quote says is particularly useful in the point you are trying to make in what you are writing’. In many cases, paraphrasing and then citing the original sources is a better option.

### 3. ‘Style plagiarism’

‘When you follow a Source Article sentence-by-sentence or paragraph-by-paragraph, it is plagiarism, even though none of your sentences are exactly like those in the source

article or even in the same order. What you are copying in this case is the author’s reasoning style’.

### 4. ‘Metaphor plagiarism’

‘Metaphors are used either to make an idea clearer or give the reader an analogy that touches the senses or emotions better than a plain description of the object or process. Metaphors, then, are an important part of an author’s creative style. If you cannot come up with your own metaphor to illustrate an important idea, then use the metaphor in the Source Article, but give the author credit for it’.

### 5. ‘Idea plagiarism’

‘If the author of the source article expresses a creative idea or suggests a solution to a problem, the idea or solution must be clearly attributed to the author. Students seem to have a hard time distinguishing author’s ideas and/or solutions from public domain information. Public domain information is any idea or solution about which people in the field accept as general knowledge. For example, what a black hole is and how it is defined is general knowledge. You do not need to reference a general description of a black hole. The escape velocity of earth is also general knowledge and needs no reference. The distance to the centre of the Galaxy is also general knowledge. However, a new idea about how to look for black holes or a new solution to a physics problem needs to be attributed to the authors. If you do not know what is accepted as public domain in a particular field, ASK’.

## GUIDELINES FOR AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

Some of the ways in which students can avoid plagiarism are as follows ([http://www.sis.pitt.edu/~mbsclass/plagarism/how\\_to\\_prevent\\_plagiarism1.htm](http://www.sis.pitt.edu/~mbsclass/plagarism/how_to_prevent_plagiarism1.htm)):

1. By emphasising the processes involved in writing papers. Different methods to do so include requiring topic proposals, idea outlines, multiple drafts, interim working bibliographies and photocopies of sources.
2. When students apply their creativity and not just telling it in the paper. That is, instead of just copy-

pasting it from the Internet, it would be more efficient if the students read the matter and write it in their own words adding their own creative ideas to it.

3. And the most important aspect is that every student should know what plagiarism means and the University policies about it.

### **PROS AND CONS OF PLAGIARISM**

(<https://sites.google.com/site/plagiarismacademic/home/plagiarism-history/plagiarism-past/pros-and-cons-of-plagiarism>)

#### **Pros**

Less work and easy: Some say doing so saves time and effort towards the assignment.

Better grades: Is done possibly when you've actually tried the assignment, but got desperate and decided to copy someone else's work without giving proper credit to the owner.

#### **Cons**

Prevents learning: 'Basically when plagiarizing, you're not really learning anything'. So what if you find yourself in a situation when you have to apply what was learned in a class out in the real world, possibly a dream job stuck not knowing what to do. Plagiarising is not the answer!

#### **Unfairness to other student**

'There are students who put in their hours, or more to accomplish assignments given to them. It is unfair to plagiarize and get equal credit as one who actually put in their hard work'.

#### **Dishonesty and cheating**

If you do not cite when copying another's work, calling it your own. You are not only cheating by stealing their work you are also being dishonest with yourself, information that may have taken them days to accomplish.

### **HOW TO PREVENT PLAGIARISM**

In a research paper, you have to come up with your own original ideas while at the same time using work that is

already been done by others. But how can you tell where their ideas end and your own begin? What is the proper way to include sources in your paper? If you change some of what an author said, do you still have to cite that person?

Confusion about the answers to these questions often leads to plagiarism. If you have similar questions, or are concerned about preventing plagiarism, we recommend using the checklist below.

#### **A. Consult with your instructor**

Have questions about plagiarism? If you cannot find the answers on our site, or are unsure about something, you should ask your instructor. He or she will most likely be very happy to answer your questions. You can also check out the guidelines for citing sources properly. If you follow them and the rest of the advice on this page, you should have no problems with plagiarism.

#### **B. Plan your paper**

Planning your paper well is the first and most important step you can take towards preventing plagiarism. If you know you are going to use other sources of information, you need to plan how you are going to include them in your paper. This means working out a balance between the ideas you have taken from other sources and your own, original ideas. Writing an outline or coming up with a thesis statement in which you clearly formulate an argument about the information you find, will help establish the boundaries between your ideas and those of your sources.

#### **C. Take effective notes**

One of the best ways to prepare for a research paper is by taking thorough notes from all of your sources so that you have much of the information organised before you begin writing. On the other hand, poor note-taking can lead to many problems – including improper citations and misquotations, both of which are forms of plagiarism! To avoid confusion about your sources, try using different coloured fonts, pens or pencils for each one, and make sure you clearly distinguish your own ideas from those

you found elsewhere. Also, get in the habit of marking page numbers, and make sure that you record bibliographic information or web addresses for every source right away – finding them again later when you are trying to finish your paper can be a nightmare!

#### **D. When in doubt, cite sources**

Of course, you want to get credit for your own ideas. And you do not want your instructor to think that you got all of your information from somewhere else. But if it is unclear whether an idea in your paper really came from you, or whether you got it from somewhere else and just changed it a little, you should always cite your source. Instead of weakening your paper and making it seem like you have fewer original ideas, this will actually strengthen your paper by (1) showing that you are not just copying other ideas but are processing and adding to them, (2) lending outside support to the ideas that are completely yours and (3) highlighting the originality of your ideas by making clear distinctions between them and ideas you have gotten elsewhere.

#### **E. Make it clear who said what**

Even if you cite sources, ambiguity in your phrasing can often disguise the real source of any given idea, causing inadvertent plagiarism. Make sure when you mix your own ideas with those of your sources that you always clearly distinguish them. If you are discussing the ideas of more than one person, watch out for confusing pronouns. For example, imagine you are talking about Harold Bloom's discussion of James Joyce's opinion of Shakespeare, and you write: 'He brilliantly portrayed the situation of a writer in society at that time'. Who is the 'He' in this sentence? Bloom, Joyce or Shakespeare? Who is the 'writer': Joyce, Shakespeare or one of their characters? Always make sure to distinguish who said what, and give credit to the right person.

#### **F. Know how to paraphrase**

A paraphrase is a restatement in your own words of someone else's ideas. Changing a few words of the original sentences does NOT make your writing a

legitimate paraphrase. You must change both the words and the sentence structure of the original, without changing the content. Also, you should keep in mind that paraphrased passages still require citation because the ideas came from another source, even though you are putting them in your own words.

The purpose of paraphrasing is not to make it seem like you are drawing less directly from other sources or to reduce the number of quotations in your paper. It is a common misconception among students that you need to hide the fact that you rely on other sources. Actually it is advantageous to highlight the fact that other sources support your own ideas. Using quality sources to support your ideas makes them seem stronger and more valid. Good paraphrasing makes the ideas of the original source fit smoothly into your paper, emphasising the most relevant points and leaving out unrelated information.

#### **G. Evaluate your sources**

Not all sources on the web are worth citing – in fact, many of them are just plain wrong. So how do you tell the good ones apart? For starters, make sure you know the author(s) of the page, where they got their information, and when they wrote it (getting this information is also an important step in avoiding plagiarism!). Then you should determine how credible you feel the source is: how well they support their ideas, the quality of the writing, the accuracy of the information provided, etc. We recommend using Portland Community College's 'rubrics for evaluating web pages' as an easy method of testing the credibility of your sources.

**H. Integrate plagiarism prevention techniques into your system.** Document provided by Turnitin.com and Research Resources.

#### **PLAGIARISM DETECTION**

Plagiarism detection is the process of locating instances of plagiarism within a work or document. The widespread use of computers and the advent of the Internet have made it easier to plagiarise the work of others. Most cases of plagiarism are found in academia, where documents are

typically essays or reports. However, plagiarism can be found in virtually any field, including scientific papers, art designs and source code.

Plagiarism detection can be either manual or computer assisted. Manual detection requires substantial effort and excellent memory, and is impractical in cases where too many documents must be compared, or original documents are not available for comparison. Computer-assisted detection allows vast collections of documents to be compared to each other, making successful detection much more likely (Wikipedia).

### **ANTI-PLAGIARISM TOOLS**

The most accurate way to detect plagiarism is to take a 'fingerprint' of a paper – defined by structure, words and content – and compare it with papers stored in an electronic archive or on the Internet using Plagiarism.org (www.plagiarism.org).

Turnitin is an Internet-based plagiarism-prevention service created by iParadigms, LLC, first launched in 1997. Typically, universities and high schools buy licenses to submit essays to the Turnitin website, which checks the documents for unoriginal content. The results can be used to identify similarities to existing sources or can be used in formative assessment to help students learn how to avoid plagiarism and improve their writing.

The emergence of these software and web-based services together with powerful computers and their ability to mine large electronic databases for instances of plagiarism promises to revolutionise the peer review process and raise the quality of published research everywhere.

To prevent plagiarism, software tools are developed that are referred to as anti-plagiarism software (Wikipedia).

INFLIBNET centre (An IUC of UGC) is also providing web-based anti-plagiarism software (iThenticate and Turnitin) to universities for checking plagiarism under Shodhganga mission. The University has to formulate their own guideline to deal with the act of plagiarism and other academic misconduct.

## **PLAGIARISM ISSUES RELATED TO SHODHGANGA**

There are two kinds of queries generally received by the INFLIBNET Centre regarding plagiarism associated with Shodhganga.

### **1. Plagiarism reported in the thesis submitted in Shodhganga**

INFLIBNET Centre hosts the thesis only after formally awarding the thesis by the university and notifies it officially. Since the thesis is already awarded by the university, the INFLIBNET Centre does not have any mandate to check plagiarism. Moreover, INFLIBNET Centre has only non-exclusive right to host the content in its national portal 'Shodhganga' for its worldwide access. If any incident of plagiarism is noticed, a formal complaint should be lodged to the competent authority (i.e., Vice Chancellor or Registrar) of the respective university. The authority should take it with research supervisors and research scholar to resolve the issue of plagiarism. However, INFLIBNET Centre will withdraw the content, if competent authority formally request to the Centre to withdraw the content. At any cost INFLIBNET Centre will not entertain any direct request from anyone apart from the competent authority of the university.

### **2. Plagiarism noticed in other publications from content of Shodhganga**

If content from the theses submitted in Shodhganga is noticed in any other publications, such cases are to be reported to the editors or publishers of the publications. Such violations of copyright/IPR should be brought to the notice of INFLIBNET also. The same may be reported to the respective university/guide/researcher. There are many voluntary organisations to watch the act of plagiarism such as research retreat, research watch, etc. The act may be reported to such organisation as well. INFLIBNET Centre is working on the technologies that prevent direct copying from the content of the Shodhganga and also impose water marking in the content

(Plagiarism Prevention Policy, University of Pretoria/ Doc. No. S 4726/09).

### ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF USING ANTI-PLAGIARISM TOOLS

Some anti-plagiarism tools are Web-based and there is no need to download and install the software; some are freeware while others are shareware. Anti-plagiarism tools also help in saving time compared to that of scanning manually. One of the major drawbacks of such software is that the emphasis is more on detecting plagiarism than on educating students. At times when teachers do not find any plagiarised information, they need to use search engines or software to cross-check submitted assignments. Some software compares the submitted report with a database and leaves it at that. At times, this database is limited, and a paper could be plagiarised using documents beyond the parameters of a particular application. At times these software cannot distinguish between cheating done intentionally and mistakes done while summarising, rephrasing, etc.

The major disadvantages of using anti-plagiarism tools are as follows:

1. It does not come free in most of the cases.
2. Student data and student work are being made available to third parties.
3. It detects only collusion among students, and cannot detect material downloaded from the web.
4. Students actually have to sit down to a test to fulfil the requirements.
5. Formatting is lost in the checking procedure, so essays for marking have to be submitted separately from essays for checking.

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### CONCLUSION

The article shows that plagiarism by students is common and getting more so (particularly with increased access to digital sources, including the Internet) that there are multiple reasons why students plagiarise and that students often rationalise their cheating behaviour and downplay the importance of plagiarism by themselves and their peers.

Whether or not the problem has reached epidemic proportions, as some observers insist, it is clearly a major problem, and one that appears to be on the increase. The practice of plagiarism is a major challenge to institutional aspirations of academic integrity and a major threat to institutional quality assurance and enhancement, and it needs to be taken into account when developing and implementing institutional learning, teaching and assessment strategies. There is a growing need for institutions to develop cohesive frameworks for dealing with student plagiarism that are based on prevention supported by robust detection and penalty systems that are transparent and applied consistently. At present, there are no foolproof tools/techniques available to detect plagiarism but sincere efforts are being made in this direction. It is true that no one can prevent plagiarism but sincere efforts can be made to reduce plagiarism.

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