

Short Communication

Plagiarism - A Serious Scientific Misconduct

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ABSTRACT

The practice of taking the ideas of others or copying the text completely or with little rephrasing constitutes the plagiarism. The plagiarism is a grave form of scientific misconduct. The scientific literature is full of evidences in which manuscripts were annulled due to plagiarism. In this present paper authors highlight this serious issue of plagiarism and also suggest ways to limit the same.

Keywords: Journal, Publication, Researchers, Scientific writing.

INTRODUCTION

The publications are an important part of professional development and knowledge sharing. [1] However, getting an article published is a difficult task, especially in the settings when a young researcher or student is not given in-house training at school or college level, to refrain from corrupt practices like plagiarism. [1] As per the Oxford English Dictionary the word 'plagiarism' means the practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own. [2] And, the verb to 'plagiarize' is defined as to take (the work or an idea of someone else) and pass it off as one's own. [3]

The scientific writing is not easy. [4] The young researchers, especially from the developing and underdeveloped countries in their quest to publish are usually not aware of the fact that what exactly plagiarism is, and thus they unknowingly plagiarize. A study reported that the plagiarism leading to retraction of

articles was present in articles from 30 out of 53 countries that were studied. [5] The cause could well be attributed to a number of factors. These factors could be due to peer pressure or parental pressure. [6] The enthusiasm in young researchers to publish early in their careers is also a major factor. [6] These young researchers do not pay heed to the publication ethics and often are not aware of the consequences. [6] Besides, there is a new trend going on in certain developing countries wherein, the guides of the postgraduate students force them to get the students dissertation or thesis published in the guide's name. This is really grave as the student often resorts to plagiarism due extreme pressure from their own teachers and also they are always under fear that if they do not publish then they might not succeed in their exams. The extent of such practice is even present at the undergraduate levels when the students are relatively new to the research fields and are mostly unaware of the consequences of plagiarism. The reason

for this corrupt practice could well be due to the facts that many a times the total number of publications is the criteria for the promotion in the academic fields. [7] Besides, in countries where research is not given prime importance then getting any other persons work published under one's name is a common form of scientific misconduct. The reports of retraction of articles from China, where it was mandatory to publish leading to extreme plagiarism are available in the scientific literature. [5] There are also other factors that determine the plagiarism. These are especially prevalent in the countries where English is not the first language. The researchers in such countries mostly resort to search engines like Google to locate the freely available articles and then they copy and paste the same with few rephrasing. [6]

The roles of unscrupulous journals publishing the manuscripts, mostly for the purpose of making money are also responsible for the plagiarism. The list of such predatory publishers is available on the internet. [8] These journals are money making machines and wherein the provision to check plagiarism and ethical issues related to publishing are not usually followed. A study published on the number of retractions in the biomedical journal found that the plagiarism accounts for 9.8%-17.0% retractions. [5] Similar percentages have been reported elsewhere. [5] However, only a fraction of the published literature is ever retracted, and only a smaller part of that is ever annulled due to plagiarism. [5,9-13] The professional publication houses must devise appropriate guidelines to educate authors, to dissuade plagiarism before it is attempted, and to recognize it before publication. [13]

There is a number of plagiarism detection software available in the market that can easily point out the plagiarized articles. [7,14] However, such softwares are usually paid and thus the researchers resort to practices where they do not check their articles before submitting to the journals. Besides, even such software has flaws, like

figures and equations cannot be checked. [7,15] A number of studies have recommended the use of anti-plagiarism software. [16-19] The students should be given formal training at the school or college level to use these softwares so that they should never resort to intentional or unintentional plagiarism.

CONCLUSIONS

The problem of plagiarism is grave and need to be addressed. In a country like India, where about 40% of the population earns less than one US dollar per day and where only a small part of the budget goes to health, it is not expected to find an answer to the burgeoning problem of plagiarism with intervention from the governments. [20,21] The plagiarism can be controlled by stricter laws and intervention from the researchers and the journals. The regulatory bodies like international the Committee on Publication Ethics, UK and the ORI, USA have to take stricter actions against those indulging in plagiarism. [6] The lack of any formal government bodies dedicated to preventing the malpractices related to publication in the education sector has led to flourishing plagiarism. [6] The corrupt practices prevalent among the seniors to enforce their names in the dissertation/projects/thesis of their students have to be controlled. The role of governing bodies, both at the local level like the colleges and at the national level like the Medical Council of India, Dental Council of India, etc. has to play a major role to control this practice prevalent in the developing countries like India. Even with controls at multiple levels it will never be possible to stop plagiarism, however with efforts at all the levels related to publication it can be minimized. Plagiarism results in loss to authors who plagiarize, as if detected the papers are withdrawn, the editors or publishers who unknowingly publish such materials and above all to the scientific community.

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