Creativity is intelligence having fun, originality an undetected plagiarism!

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Introduction

Whether unintentional or intentional, plagiarism is considered academic dishonesty and breach of ethics. Although it is in itself not a "crime," it can amount to copyright infringement and can attract penalties, suspensions and even expulsion of authors.[1] In India, students often have to write dissertations or thesis within tight deadlines. Unfortunately, more often than not, many resort to blatant plagiarism or "copy–paste" techniques, without comprehending remote consequences. There can be several reasons to explain such practice, the three most prominent ones are: (i) lack of basic understanding of "plagiarism," (ii) lack of guidance on how to avoid plagiarism and (iii) not being aware of penal provisions that can hold a person accountable. Therefore, it is imperative for young researchers to conceptualize "plagiarism," to inculcate good quality and ethical writing habits.

So, What Is "Plagiarism"?

According to *Encyclopedia Britannica*, "plagiarism" is "the act of taking the writings of another person and passing them off as one's own. The fraudulence is closely related to forgery and piracy—practices generally in violation of copyright laws."[2] A more formal definition of "plagiarism" given by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) includes "unreferenced use of others' published and unpublished ideas including research grant applications for submission under new authorship of a complex paper, sometimes in a different language. It may occur at any stage of planning, research, writing or publication; it applies to print and electronic versions."[3]

There can be various forms of plagiarism, for example, *verbatim plagiarism* (i.e., copying ad-verbatim), *mosaic plagiarism* (mixing one's own words in someone else's ideas and opinions), *cyber plagiarism* (copying online content without owner permission), *image plagiarism* (using images from other sources without attribution), *paraphrasing* (rewriting own statements or words), and *self-plagiarism* (which may be in the form of duplicate or redundant publication, augmented publication, text recycling and "salami" publication—where two or more papers are obtained essentially from the same work).[4]

How Do They Detect "Plagiarism"?

It must be noted that any manuscript under editorial review undergoes a thorough plagiarism check at the very outset. Most journals nowadays have a zero-tolerance policy on plagiarism. Manuscript scrutinies have now become increasingly automated, thanks to the availability of plagiarism detection services. These tools (may be online or offline) have in-built anti-plagiarism algorithms and return precise reports within minutes. They have resulted in significant reductions in manuscript processing time-frame in comparison to manual checks. The extent of plagiarism is usually indicated by "%" scores. A plagiarism detection service can be free or subscription-based (i.e., paid version). Both have their own pros and cons; however, the latter have better features. Some of the most recommended subscription-based plagiarism detection services include the following:

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Access this article online	
Quick Response Code:	**Website:** www.ijdvl.com
	DOI: 10.4103/ijdvl.IJDVL_71_18

iThenticate™ (proprietary)

iThenticate[5] (www.ithenticate.com) is a plagiarism detection service from iParadigms LLC. Launched in 2004, it can also be used for intellectual property protection and document-versus-document(s) analysis in addition to plagiarism detection. iThenticate's comparison database includes abstracts and citations from PubMed (more than one million) and research titles from EBSCOhost and the Gale InfoTrac OneFile (more than 20,000). It can accommodate files up to 25,000 words. Larger documents can be processed after purchasing multiple credits for segment content in parts of 25,000 words or less.

Similarity Check™ (proprietary)

Crossref Similarity Check[6] (www.crossref.org/services/similarity-check) is an exclusive partnership between Crossref™ (www.crossref.org/), a publisher association, and iThenticate plagiarism detection service. It can compare against 40 + million published research articles from 590 + leading, global scientific, technical and medical publishers.

Turnitin™ (proprietary)

Turnitin[7] is a web-based plagiarism detection service launched in 1997. Most academic institutes typically buy a license to use the software-as-a-service website. Turnitin's parent company, iParadigms LLC (which also owns iThenticate), also runs an online plagiarism resource portal, www.plagiarism.org.

Check For Plagiarism™ (proprietary)

Check For Plagiarism[8] (www.checkforplagiarism.net) is an incredibly dynamic plagiarism detection service accepting files in more than 100 languages and file formats. It allows for plagiarism checking, grammar checking, sentence structure and synonym checking along with support for multiple western and eastern scripts.

PlagScan™ (proprietary)

PlagScan[9] (www.plagscan.com) is an on-premise software as a service-based plagiarism detection service mostly used by universities and high schools; however, it also offers its services to the commercial market. It was launched in 2009 and is best known to compare submissions with more than a million web documents and internal archives. It maintains copyright regulations, particularly following the German Bundesdatenschutzgesetz. It has a provision of a free trial with a 2000-word limit.

Are There Any Free Plagiarism Detection Services?

Yes. But of late, most "free" plagiarism detection services have adopted a "freemium" approach which is a portmanteau of "free" and "premium." It is basically a pricing strategy by which the service is provided free of charge for basic features (like 1000-word limit), but a subscription fee (or premium) is charged for availing additional features (like higher word count or pages). However, the features included under the basic category are usually sufficient for most young users. Some of the most popular plagiarism detection services under this category include the below.

Small SEO Tools™ (free)

Small SEO Tools[10] (www.smallseotools.com) is probably the most widely used plagiarism detection service as it offers a multitude of features, including a plagiarism checker, article rewriter, keyword position checker, grammar checker, image compression tool, reverse image search, page authority checker, spell checker, backlink checker, keyword density checker, website page size checker, Google cache checker and so on. It has 1000-word limit per search.

PlagTracker™ (freemium)

PlagTracker[11] (www.plagtracker.com) is a Ukrainian-based online plagiarism detection service launched in 2011. It is a very popular service, because it can accommodate unlimited number of documents for free, up to 5000 words at a time. It also provides other options like being multilingual (English, French, German, Spanish, Romanian) and analysis of Latin or Cyrillic symbols.

Paper Rater™ (freemium)

Paper Rater[12] software (www.paperrater.com) uses a Linux-based operating system to screen documents for similar texts. It allows up to six pages at roughly 300 words per page under its free service. The premium version allows checks up to 15 pages.

Unicheck™ (freemium)

Unicheck[13] (www.unicheck.com) is a cloud-based plagiarism detection service. It is actually a rebranded version from Unplag available since 2014. It can recognize synonyms and paraphrased content very swiftly (average processing time per page is 4 seconds). In addition, it can also recognize citations and references in the text and cross-check for proper formatting according to any of the current academic styles.

Grammarly™ (freemium)

Grammarly[14] (www.grammarly.com) is a cloud-based English-language writing-enhancement platform developed by Grammarly, Inc. It was first released in late 2009. Grammarly's proof-reading and plagiarism detection service checks more than 250 grammar rules. It is available through an extension for web browsers like Chrome, Safari and Firefox. Grammarly is also available as a mobile app; a premium service is available for a monthly payment.

Can a Plagiarism Checker Really Detect "Plagiarism"?

Technically speaking, plagiarism detection services do not actually screen for plagiarized content *per se*. Instead, what they actually detect are sections of identical text or "similarity." It happens by scanning for matching string of words between the document it is looking at and the ones it

has in its index or from other sources, such as online literature. This feature, however, can be an operational blind-spot in situations like *non-verbatim plagiarism* or *paraphrasing*. Therefore, plagiarism detection services are mere tools, and hence, users must use it prudently.

Are There Any Penal Provisions against Plagiarism in India?

Contrary to popular understanding, India does have penal provisions against plagiarism. It may range from disciplinary actions to criminal charges. In 2017, University Grants Commission (UGC) mandated all Indian universities (state and central) to screen all "thesis, dissertations, term papers, publications, or any such document" using plagiarism detection service.[15] Students must submit an undertaking of originality, duly certified by respective supervisor or guide, making both the student and the guide accountable. Moreover, UGC also mandates universities to impose maximum penalty in cases where any amount of plagiarism may be detected in the "core" work (abstract, summary, hypothesis, observations, results, conclusions and recommendations).[15] In "non-core" areas, plagiarism has been quantified into four different classes according to the proportion of "copied" or overlapping content: <10% (can be overlooked), Level 1 (10%–40%), Level 2 (40%–60%) and Level 3 (>60%).[15]

Subsequently, penalties have been quantified and may vary depending on who the plagiarist is. For instance, students (undergraduate, postgraduate, MPhil or PhD) guilty of Level 1 and 2 offenses shall not be given any mark or credit for the plagiarized script and have to submit a revised script. For Level 3 offenses, a student can or shall lose their registration for the course![15] In case of faculty, staff or researcher found guilty of plagiarism, the provisions are stricter. The plagiarist will be asked to withdraw the manuscript and barred from authoring any publication for 1, 2 or 3 years for Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3 offenses, respectively. They will be denied one or two annual salary increments, in case of Level 2 and Level 3 offenses, respectively.[15] Moreover, they shall not be allowed to be a guide or supervisor for any student for a minimum of 2 or 3 years, in case of Level 2 and Level 3 offenses, respectively. UGC also recommends a harsher penalty against repeated plagiarism.[15]

So, What Is the Best Way to Avoid Plagiarism?

To be honest, there is no "golden" formula; however, adhering to following code of ethics can certainly help.[3] First, students must acknowledge sources of information by attributing references and footnotes. Second, copied texts must be enclosed in quotation marks wherever required. For extensive quotations, permission must be obtained from the publisher/copyright holder for original work. Third, when paraphrasing, the original text must be read and understood completely. Acknowledging the original source, even if expressing someone else's idea in own words, is recommended. Fourth, avoid self-plagiarism

by taking permission from publisher/copyright holder of previous article. Fifth, widely known scientific or historical facts do not require citations. However, if unsure whether an idea/fact is a common knowledge, cite references. Sixth, cite references accurately. Inaccurate referencing can also amount to plagiarism. Using referencing softwares like *Mendeley*[16] (www.mendeley.com) or *EndNote*[17] (www.endnote.com) is advisable. Finally, it is always recommended to submit a cover letter to editor confessing any instance of overlapping content or unintentional plagiarism.

Conclusion

It is important to realize that not having a "good" publication to one's credit or may be a fewer publications in comparison to others, does not implicate academic incapability or incompetence. It just reflects an author's ethical thought-process to do genuine research. Thus, as the saying goes "honesty is always the best policy."

Conflicts of interest
There are no conflicts of interest.

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