

Common Misconceptions Towards Plagiarism

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ABSTRACT

A successful completion of any research relies upon three stages-First is the planning of the research, Second is the execution of what you have planned and the final is the documentation of the whole research. All the three stages are important in themselves to produce a quality research work but the most crucial is the documentation stage. At this stage the knowledge towards plagiarism plays a critical role. Many people are aware of the term plagiarism but still people are not aware of its dimensions. One out of which is the existence of misconceptions. Lack of proper knowledge of plagiarism and relying on misconceptions can have dangerous consequences on the career of academicians. Hence, the purpose of this paper is to look after the common misconceptions among people which are related to the concept of plagiarism.

INTRODUCTION

According to Oxford English dictionary, Plagiarism can be defined as "The action or practice of taking someone else's work, idea, etc, and passing it off as your own". It is not just limited to mere copying of written text but stealing of ideas is also plagiarism.

Following activities can contribute towards plagiarism:

- (i) Changing words but with same sentence structure and not acknowledging author.
- (ii) Someone else's work presented in your own name.

- (iii) Copying ideas and words without acknowledgement.
- (iv) Writing exact words without quotation marks.
- (v) Producing in-text and end-text citations incorrectly.

REFLECTIONS FROM THE LITERATURE

In a study by Jackson (2006) on undergraduate students in their understanding towards plagiarism. It was found that students find it difficult to grasp the concept of paraphrasing. They think that just paraphrasing without citation can prevent plagiarism. In other study on the same level of students it was found that students think plagiarism takes place only when we copy from text. They do not consider taking ideas and paraphrasing it as plagiarism. But the reality is that it is also a plagiarism if you take ideas and represent them as your own without giving proper attribution to the person. Paraphrasing also needs citations (Walsh, 2013). While avoiding plagiarism we also think that only printed sources needs to be cited and referenced but it is not true in plagiarism, the medium do not matter but the idea matters. Hence, whether the source is printed or not, if you are getting the idea even from the personal conversations you need to cite it. Except personal conversations all the other things need to be cited and given in proper format as end-text citations (Durham College, 2016).

When students were taught about plagiarism, they started to think that every fact needs to be cited. Yes, plagiarism says that every fact needs to be cited but there is some knowledge called as "Common knowledge" which do not need to be cited. For example, the newton laws of motion, they are a part of common knowledge. But if the person is not sure whether the information he has taken is common knowledge or not he needs to cite the source from where the information has been taken (Plagiarism, 2014b).

In a study done by Ahmad, Mansourizadeh and Ai (2012) on group of post graduate students of Malaysian university found that students consider it only when long sentences are copied as verbatim as plagiarism but not short sentences. This was consistent with the study of Dawson and Overfield (2006). It implies that students need to be studied thoroughly towards the concept of plagiarism. Currie (1998) found that the students think that converting from one language to another is also not a plagiarism. They are not able to make a distinction between the other people ideas and other people words.

MISCONCEPTIONS TOWARDS PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism takes place only when we copy from published sources

Plagiarism takes place when a person steals or copies someone else's text or idea and reproduce it in his/her name. It is a common misunderstanding that if we copy something from someone's unpublished work then it is not plagiarism. According to Durham college (2016), "Borrowing information or ideas or facts from other source itself means citing it, if plagiarism needs to be avoided, irrespective of from where the information has been taken: internet or printed material". People do think that copying from internet sources is plagiarism but if borrowing someone else's idea then it is not plagiarism.

Plagiarism can be caught through plagiarism checking software

We know about the software like Turnitin, Urkund and Ithenticate. They are called plagiarism checking software and are used in universities to check plagiarism in the thesis/dissertations submitted by the researchers. These software are also used by the publication houses to assess the quality of the articles and books published by them. The interesting point to note is none of the software developed in the world till now can check plagiarism,

rather these software check similarity with the existed databases. There are millions of databases saved in these software, through which the similarity level is checked. The similarity is checked in terms of word to word copying, same ideas and if something is copied reference is there or not and if references are given they are authenticate or not. Now it can be understood that these Software are limited to just check copying of words and similarity. To check plagiarism, software alone are not sufficient, they need to be combined with human resources.

We need to cite each and every fact

Sometimes what we do is we try to cite every fact we are writing in our work but this is not the case because we have something called as “common knowledge”. According to Mc Combes (2018) “Common knowledge” refers to information that an average educated reader would accept without the need of validation of a source reference. Common knowledge is generally of two types: Information known by majority of people and second one is information shared by specific group of people like any cultural group or national group or professionals of a particular field. For example newton’s law of motion are known by all. They are part of common knowledge so no need to cite or give references. Similarly, we have fundamental rights, they are common knowledge for all Indians. It is a common misconception among researchers that we do have to cite common knowledge also but it is not required.

Copying exact words and giving citation is not plagiarism

Just giving citation is not always an excuse from plagiarism. It depends on how much you are copying and copying exact words or idea. If exact words are to be copied they need to be presented within quotation marks and page number must be given. Also, there is a limit for such copying of words.

If the exact words to be copied are less than 40 they can be copied as such presented within quotation marks but if the exact words to be used are more than 40 they are to be presented as a block of text without quotation marks. Also, if some information is to be left from the text then the missing information is represented by placing three dots.

Citations are difficult

It is a common notion among students especially the new writers that writing and providing citations is very technical and difficult task. They seem to be confused on what to be cited and what needs not to be cited, how to cite and especially which citation format is to be used. There are three citation formats used all over the globe, APA, MLA and Chicago. Each of them has given a format which is easily available on the internet. For doing citations manually one can go through these formats. But with the onset of technology we don't need to do manual citations, memorize formats and organize bibliographies because now we have large number of digital tools and software available in the market in which you just need to input the details and select the citation format. Rest of the work is done by the software and at the end you can have your organized bibliography in your hand. It is handy and saves time as well.

Paraphrasing is not a plagiarism

Changing or rewriting the words is also a plagiarism. The reason being plagiarism is not just a stealing of words but of ideas too. Even if the sentence is rewritten in other words idea remains the same. Hence, it is the responsibility of the writer to give proper citations and acknowledge the original author.

Plagiarism does not have consequences

It's a common thinking among many, being caught in plagiarism is difficult as well as it does not have any serious consequences. But it's not true for the current scenario, According to promotion of Academic integrity and prevention of plagiarism in higher educational institutions (2018) if a researcher is caught red-handed in plagiarism then he or she has to face penalty for similarities level ranging from 10% to more than 60%. Institutional academic integrity panel (IAIP) which is to be framed in each higher educational institution can impose a penalty on the researcher/faculty on the basis of severity of plagiarism. If the thesis/dissertation submitted by the student shows similarities between 10 to 40 percent, they need to submit another revised copy within 6 months. For similarities between 40 to 60 percent students are not allowed to submit a revised copy for one year. If the similarity is more than 60 percent, student's registration in the programme is cancelled. In case of faculty, if the academic and research publications shows similarities between 10 to 40 percent they can be asked to withdraw the publication, they will be denied a right to one annual increment and will not be allowed to supervise Master's, M.phil and Ph.d scholar for two years. If the similarity is more than 60 percent, apart from withdrawing the publication they will be denied two successive annual increments and will not be able to supervise any Master's, M. philand Ph.d student for three years. If a person is found to be guilty of repeated plagiarism then they are punished for one higher level than the level committed by them. In case of similarity more than 60 percent and being a repeated case, then they can be terminated/suspended as per service rules.

Plagiarism is a planned activity

It's a common misconception among the people that plagiarism can take place only when we want to but it's not true always, because plagiarism can

be unintentional too especially when we do not have proper knowledge of citations and references. Putting citations in a wrong format is the most common form of unintentional plagiarism. Sometimes, the ideas of two persons match coincidentally and they do not know about it, as a result unintentional plagiarism do occurs.

Citations need to be done during final editing

It is a common practice that people use to do end-text citations after writing the full text, as a result of which they skip few citations and get caught in the hands of plagiarism unintentionally. It is advised that citations must be done simultaneously with writing of text so that such situation can be avoided. In the market there are software available which can help record end-text citations in the proper format for example Mendeley, Zotero, Citeulike and Endnote. Out of the following Mendeley and Citeulike are available free of cost whereas Zotero is open source software. In these softwares, one can easily prepare references or bibliography in a proper format.

Plagiarism is just a problem of academics

It is a very common misconception that plagiarism has its implications only in academics but its not true. Plagiarism is bound to have an effect in almost all fields of work because the basic criterion of plagiarism is the stealing of ideas which can take place in any field of work. For example, for the Bollywood movie Hindi Medium(2017), it was alleged that the story of the film was taken from the Bengali film Ramdhanu (2014). Similarly other movies like Manjhi-The mountain man(2015),Jagaan (2001) had been alleged to be based on stolen ideas. Famous Hollywood movies like Terminator, Inception and Avatar also being part of the plagiarism controversies. Famous singer Ed Sheeren, famous around the world for hit singles was sued by

two songwriters who claimed that sheeren's one hit single had similarity with the song written for the winner of british music and singing competition.

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