

ETHICS AND PLAGIARISM IN ACADEMIC RESEARCH:A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Ethics and plagiarism are two interconnected concepts that significantly influence the integrity and credibility of academic research. This paper aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the ethical considerations surrounding plagiarism in academic research. It examines the definition of plagiarism, its various forms, and the ethical implications associated with its occurrence. Furthermore, the paper discusses the underlying reasons for plagiarism, including academic pressure, lack of understanding, and cultural differences. Additionally, it explores the consequences of plagiarism, both for individuals and the academic community as a whole. Finally, the paper offers practical strategies for preventing and addressing plagiarism, emphasizing the importance of education, awareness, and institutional policies in upholding academic integrity.

Key words –Ethics, Plagiarism, Academic Research, Critical Analysis

MEANING OF ETHICS IN ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Ethics in academic research serve as the cornerstone for maintaining integrity, trust, and credibility within the scholarly community. At its core, ethical research entails adherence to principles that prioritize the well-being and rights of individuals, ensure the reliability and validity of findings, and uphold the broader societal values associated with the pursuit of knowledge. Central to this framework are principles such as honesty, transparency, accountability, and respect for diversity.

Researchers are obligated to obtain informed consent from participants, ensuring they understand the purpose, risks, and benefits of their involvement in a study. Additionally, researchers must protect participants from harm, both physical and psychological, and safeguard their privacy and confidentiality. Moreover, honesty in reporting findings and avoiding biases, conflicts of interest, or plagiarism are paramount to maintain the integrity of academic research.

Furthermore, ethical considerations extend beyond interactions with human participants to encompass responsible conduct regarding data management, animal research, and collaboration with colleagues. Adherence to ethical guidelines not only fosters trust among researchers and the public but also ensures the advancement of knowledge that is ethically sound and socially beneficial. Ultimately, the ethical conduct of academic research is indispensable for upholding

the credibility and legitimacy of scholarly endeavors, thereby contributing to the advancement of society as a whole.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Analyzing the intersection of ethics and plagiarism in academic research is a complex and multifaceted topic that has been extensively explored in scholarly literature. Here's a list of key works that delve into this subject:

1. **"The Oxford Handbook of Academic Ethics" edited by Donald E. Hall:** This comprehensive handbook covers various aspects of academic ethics, including plagiarism, authorship, and intellectual property. It provides critical analyses and insights into ethical challenges faced by researchers.
2. **"Plagiarism: Alchemy and Remedy in Higher Education" by Bill Marsh:** Marsh examines the phenomenon of plagiarism in higher education, its underlying causes, and potential remedies. The book offers a critical analysis of plagiarism within the broader context of academic integrity.
3. **"The Ethics of Research with Human Subjects: Protecting People, Advancing Science, Promoting Trust" by Jonathan D. Moreno and Sam Berger:** While not solely focused on plagiarism, this book explores ethical issues in research, including integrity and honesty in academic work. It offers critical reflections on ethical conduct in research practices.
4. **"Ethics and Integrity in Visual Research Methods: A Systematic Approach" by Jacob D. Rawlins and Christina Silver:** Although primarily focused on visual research methods, this book addresses ethical considerations relevant to all forms of academic research. It emphasizes the importance of integrity and honesty in scholarly work.
5. **"Plagiarism, Intellectual Property and the Teaching of L2 Writing" edited by Lise Buranen and Alice M. Roy:** This collection of essays examines plagiarism from the perspective of second language writing instruction. It offers critical insights into how plagiarism is perceived, addressed, and prevented in educational settings.
6. **"Understanding and Preventing Plagiarism: Strategies and Resources for Students and Teachers" by Kathleen Fitzpatrick and Judith A. Wilde:** Targeted towards educators and students, this book provides practical strategies for understanding, identifying, and preventing plagiarism. It offers a critical examination of plagiarism in academic contexts and suggests proactive approaches to maintain integrity.
7. **"Plagiarism Education and Prevention: A Subject-Driven Case-Based Approach" by Diane Pecorari:** Pecorari's book adopts a case-based approach to explore plagiarism in various disciplinary contexts. It offers critical analyses of real-life plagiarism cases and discusses strategies for prevention and education.

These works provide a solid foundation for critically analyzing ethics and plagiarism in academic research, offering insights into the complexities of maintaining integrity and honesty in scholarly endeavors.

THE AREA OF ETHICS

There are four branches of Ethics namely Descriptive Ethics, Normative Ethics, Meta-Ethics, and Applied Ethics.

a. Descriptive Ethics

It is the study of people's beliefs about morality based on empirical investigation. It gives us a general pattern or a way of life of people in different types of communities. It gives a record of certain taboos, customs, or conventions. It aims to find out people's beliefs about values, which actions are right and wrong, and which characteristics of a moral agent are virtuous. Descriptive Ethics is a value-free approach to ethics. It is an empirical investigation of people's moral beliefs.

b. Normative Ethics or prescriptive ethics

It is the study of ethical theories that prescribe how people ought to act. It examines standards for the rightness and wrongness of actions. It suggests punishment when a person deviates from the path of ideals. It justifies punishing a person who disturbs social and moral order. It tries to establish certain theories on the guidelines of some norms. Normative Ethics offer the moral principles to use to resolve difficult moral decisions.

c. Meta-Ethics

Meta-Ethics is the study of what ethical terms and theories refer to. It determines the validity of theories advanced in Normative Ethics. We use certain moral concepts such as right, wrong, good, or bad to evaluate human actions. Meta-Ethics analyses ethical concepts. It studies the meaning of moral language and the metaphysics of moral facts. Meta-Ethics seeks to understand the nature of ethical properties and evaluations. Meta-Ethics deals with the questions such as 'What is the meaning of moral terms or judgments?', 'What is the nature of moral judgments?', 'How may moral judgments be supported or defended?'

d. Applied Ethics

Applied Ethics deals with the problems confronted in our life. It attempts to apply ethical theory to real-life situations. It helps to use knowledge of moral principles to present dilemmas. Certain issues arise due to the newly adopted lifestyle. Applied Ethics deals with the questions such as, "Is getting an abortion immoral?" "Is euthanasia immoral?" "Is affirmative action right or wrong?" "What are human rights, and how do we determine them?" "Do animals have rights as well?" and "Do individuals have the right of self-determination?" Applied Ethics develops into Environmental Ethics, Media Ethics, Business Ethics, Ethics of Legal Profession, and Ethics of Care.

MEANING OF PLAGIARISM:

Plagiarism is the representation of another authors' language, thoughts, ideas or expressions as ones' own original work. Now-a-days, you can see increasing numbers of plagiarism cases in academic world. Plagiarism is considered as an academic crime. We all must be aware about various aspects of plagiarism to improve the quality of research and academic writings.

A. DEFINITION OF PLAGIARISM

According to the Merriam Webster dictionary (n.d.), plagiarism can be defined as “to steal and pass off (the idea or words of another) as one’s own: use (another’s production) without crediting the source.”

According to University of Essex (2007), plagiarism is ‘using or copying the work of others (whether written, printed or in any other form) without proper acknowledgement in any coursework’.

All published and unpublished material, whether in manuscript, printed or electronic form, is covered under the plagiarism (University of Oxford, n.d.).

B. FORMS OF PLAGIARISM

- 1) **Direct Plagiarism-** When a researcher counterfeits the exact data or information from some other sources and do not mention the citation of the original work, this results in direct plagiarism. Such works are considered to be unethical and illegal in research area. This is an illegitimate activity and is further punishable for whosoever involves into it.
- 2) **Self Plagiarism-** This is the practice of using one's own work that has been prepared previously, without the permission of the teachers. If a student uses the assignment of his previous class in the various other classes, he is deliberately being caught in self plagiarism. The students must take permission from their teachers to cite their previous assignments in their present area of work. Moreover the researchers should use citations of their previous data to be quoted in the present papers.
- 3) **Mosaic Plagiarism-** When a researcher uses the information or facts and figures of some others' work without using the quotation marks or by changing the words of their work, they are indulging in a punishable activity. In academics, this is considered as illicit if your work is not quoted or cited by the source of the work. Thus, this dishonest act should not be performed intentionally as it would lead to severe consequences. One should acknowledge the root of their research.
- 4) **Accidental Plagiarism-** When a researcher uses some quotes or information from some other work and does not cite their sources or uses the technique of paraphrasing unintentionally. So, they must work as per the norms and guidelines and must not forget to be careful while copying the work of others.
- 5) **Paraphrasing-** When a researcher reads someone's paper and does some minor changes in his work by altering the words or the sequence of words but the basic idea remains the same. Researchers do not change the main concept of the paper but just modify the presentation of their work.

DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN INTENTIONAL AND UNINTENTIONAL PLAGIARISM:

Differentiating between intentional and unintentional plagiarism is crucial for maintaining academic integrity. Here's how you can distinguish between the two:

(A) INTENTIONAL PLAGIARISM:

Copying without attribution: This occurs when someone knowingly presents someone else's work as their own without giving credit. It could involve copying text verbatim, paraphrasing without citation, or using someone else's ideas without acknowledgment.

Deliberate fabrication: This involves inventing or falsifying information or data and presenting it as original work.

Self-plagiarism: When a person reuses their own previously published work without citation or permission, especially in a way that could deceive readers into thinking it's new or original content.

(B) UNINTENTIONAL PLAGIARISM:

Improper citation or referencing: Sometimes, writers might forget to cite a source properly or incorrectly format citations, leading to unintentional plagiarism.

Poor paraphrasing: Even if the intention is not to plagiarize, if the paraphrasing is too close to the original text or structure, it can still be considered plagiarism.

Lack of awareness: Some individuals may not fully understand what constitutes plagiarism, especially if they are new to academic writing or if English is not their first language. In such cases, unintentional plagiarism can occur due to ignorance rather than deliberate deception.

To avoid unintentional plagiarism, it's essential to

- Familiarize yourself with citation styles and academic conventions.
- Learn how to properly paraphrase and summarize information.
- Use plagiarism detection tools to check your work before submission.
- Seek clarification from instructors or mentors if unsure about citation practices.
- In contrast, intentional plagiarism involves knowingly and deceitfully using someone else's work as your own, whereas unintentional plagiarism
- Ethical Implications of Plagiarism
- Violation of intellectual property rights
- Undermining academic integrity and credibility
- Impact on trust within the academic community
- Factors Contributing to Plagiarism
- Academic pressure and deadlines
- Lack of understanding of citation and referencing
- Cultural differences in academic practices
- Consequences of Plagiarism
- Academic sanctions and penalties
- Damage to professional reputation
- Legal implications
- Preventing and Addressing Plagiarism
- Education and awareness programs

- Use of plagiarism detection software
- Development and enforcement of institutional policies
- Case Studies and Examples
- Notable cases of plagiarism in academic research
- Lessons learned and implications for ethical conduct

ROLE OF ETHICS IN RESEARCH:

The role of ethics in research is paramount for ensuring that studies are conducted responsibly, with integrity, and with due consideration for the well-being and rights of participants, communities, and society as a whole. Ethics in research serve several crucial purposes:

Protection of Participants: Ethical guidelines and principles safeguard the rights, dignity, and well-being of individuals who participate in research studies. This includes ensuring informed consent, minimizing harm and risks, and protecting vulnerable populations such as children, the elderly, and those with diminished capacity.

Ensuring Scientific Integrity: Ethics in research help maintain the integrity of the scientific process by promoting honesty, accuracy, and transparency in the design, conduct, and reporting of research. This involves avoiding fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism of data and findings.

Maintaining Public Trust: Ethical conduct in research is essential for building and maintaining public trust in the scientific community. Transparency, accountability, and adherence to ethical standards foster confidence among stakeholders, including participants, funding agencies, policymakers, and the general public.

Avoiding Harm and Exploitation: Ethical considerations help researchers identify and mitigate potential risks and harms associated with their studies. This includes not only physical harm but also psychological, social, and economic harm. Ethical guidelines also guard against the exploitation of individuals or communities, ensuring that they are not unfairly burdened or exploited for the benefit of others.

Respecting Cultural and Social Diversity: Ethical research practices recognize and respect the diversity of cultural values, beliefs, and practices. Researchers must be sensitive to cultural differences and ensure that their studies do not impose their own values or norms onto participants or communities.

Compliance with Regulations and Standards: Adherence to ethical guidelines ensures compliance with legal and regulatory requirements governing research, including institutional policies, national regulations, and international standards such as the Declaration of Helsinki or the Belmont Report.

Balancing Risks and Benefits: Ethical decision-making in research involves weighing the potential risks and benefits of the study to individuals, communities, and society as a whole. Researchers must strive to maximize the benefits of their research while minimizing any foreseeable risks or harms.

Promoting Responsible Conduct: Ethics in research foster a culture of responsible conduct among researchers, encouraging them to reflect critically on the ethical implications of their work and to take responsibility for the ethical dimensions of their research practices.

In summary, ethics play a central role in guiding and regulating the conduct of research, ensuring that it is conducted in a manner that upholds fundamental principles of respect, integrity, and accountability. By adhering to ethical standards, researchers can contribute to the advancement of knowledge while also upholding the rights and welfare of individuals and communities involved in the research process.

ROLE OF PLAGIARISM IN RESEARCH:

Plagiarism plays a detrimental role in research and academic integrity. Here are some key points highlighting its significance:

Undermining Academic Integrity: Plagiarism violates the fundamental principles of academic integrity, honesty, and originality. It misrepresents the work of others as one's own, leading to a breach of trust within the academic community.

Intellectual Theft: Plagiarism involves the unauthorized use or reproduction of someone else's ideas, words, or creations without proper acknowledgment. It deprives the original author of due credit and recognition for their intellectual contributions.

Quality of Research: Plagiarism compromises the quality and credibility of research. When scholars engage in plagiarism, they fail to contribute original insights, weakening the overall advancement of knowledge in their field.

Erosion of Trust: Plagiarism erodes trust between researchers, institutions, and the public. It undermines the reliability and authenticity of academic work, casting doubt on the integrity of research findings and scholarly publications.

Legal and Ethical Ramifications: Plagiarism can have legal consequences, especially in cases of copyright infringement. It violates ethical standards and codes of conduct established by academic institutions and professional organizations.

Impact on Careers: Plagiarism can tarnish the reputation of researchers and jeopardize their academic and professional careers. Discovery of plagiarism can result in disciplinary actions, including academic sanctions, loss of employment, and damage to one's credibility and future opportunities.

Stifling Innovation: Plagiarism stifles innovation and originality in research. By recycling existing work instead of generating new ideas and discoveries, plagiarists hinder the progress of knowledge and inhibit creative thinking.

Educational Implications: Plagiarism undermines the educational process by encouraging dishonest practices and discouraging critical thinking, independent research, and proper citation practices among students and scholars.

Overall, plagiarism poses serious ethical, legal, and academic challenges that undermine the integrity and credibility of research endeavors. It is essential for researchers to uphold principles

of honesty, integrity, and originality in their work to maintain the highest standards of academic excellence and contribute meaningfully to the advancement of knowledge.

PLAGIARISM DETECTION SOFTWARE:

Plagiarism detection or content similarity detection is the process in which one try to find out the similarity or copyright infringement of any document or content. In this process, one takes help of some software, which is called plagiarism detection software. There are mainly two types of plagiarism detection software: open access/freely available software and pay and use software.

Open access/freely available software: These are the software(s) which anyone can use free of cost to check the content similarity or plagiarism in the written work. Few such software(s) are Dupli checker, Plagiarisma, Copyleaks, PaperRater, etc., which are being used to check plagiarism with certain conditions. These open access or free to use software(s) work on specific conditions like some software allow to use freely for 15 days, some allow for one month, some allow for certain words limit, etc.

Commercial software: These software(s) are being used on payment basis. You have to pay to check the originality in your work. But there are some organizations which purchase the licence of software as institution or organization and allow to individuals/members to use free of cost having user account with designation on it.

For example: INFLIBNET has subscribed URKUND and allows access to various universities and colleges freely through their libraries. Some institutions/universities have subscribed Turnitin for this purpose.

CONCLUSION:

Ethics and plagiarism in academic research are integral to maintaining the integrity and credibility of scholarly pursuits. Plagiarism, the act of using someone else's ideas, words, or work without proper attribution, undermines the principles of academic honesty and originality. It violates trust between scholars and erodes the foundation of knowledge exchange. Ethical conduct in research demands rigorous adherence to citing sources, respecting intellectual property rights, and upholding academic standards.

A critical analysis reveals that plagiarism not only tarnishes individual reputations but also compromises the advancement of knowledge by devaluing genuine contributions. It undermines the ethos of academic communities built on mutual respect, collaboration, and intellectual integrity. Combating plagiarism requires robust educational efforts, clear guidelines, and strict enforcement mechanisms. Researchers must prioritize ethical conduct, recognizing that academic integrity is fundamental to the credibility and progress of scholarly endeavors. By upholding ethical principles and combating plagiarism, academia can foster an environment conducive to innovation, trust, and the pursuit of truth

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