



Policy of the Open Journal of Psychiatry & Allied Sciences (OJPAS®) related to plagiarism

Abstract

This editorial highlights the pertinent issue of intentionally or unintentionally using other sources without proper citation in scientific literature and how the journal stringently tries to follow zero tolerance towards such practice with the active cooperation of the authors, reviewers, and editors.

Keywords: Citation. Literature. Journal.

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Received: 3 December 2018

Revised: 5 December 2018

Accepted: 8 December 2018

Epub: 4 January 2019

DOI: 10.5958/2394-2061.2019.00019.3

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has recently released a notification of prescribed regulations to promote academic integrity in all the universities under its jurisdiction. The objective is to create awareness about responsible conduct of research and to prevent plagiarism in the academic writings of faculty and student. This regulation will also result in institutions to levy punitive measure on researchers who fail to maintain the standard the UGC has prescribed. It will be mandatory to submit a declaration by the research supervisor that the academic writing is free of plagiarism.[1]

The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) defines plagiarism as-

“Unreferenced use of others’ published and unpublished ideas including research grant applications to submission under ‘new’ authorship of a complete paper, sometimes in a different language.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.”[2]

The definition given by the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) have the same substance-

“Plagiarism is the use of others’ published and unpublished ideas or words (or other intellectual property) without attribution or permission and presenting them as new and original rather than derived from an existing source. The intent and effect of plagiarism is to mislead the reader as to the contributions of the plagiarizer. This applies whether

the ideas or words are taken from abstracts, research grant applications, Institutional Review Board applications, or unpublished or published manuscripts in any publication format (print or electronic).”[3]

The central idea of these definitions in plagiarism is not giving credit or acknowledging the person or a group whose ideas or work you have used which results in a false belief among the readers that the author is the person who has created the idea or text. According to the WAME strict definition, plagiarism is when you copy more than six consecutive words or if seven to 11 words are overlapping in a set of 30 letters.[3-5]

Plagiarism can be of ideas (using someone else’s idea, in whole or in part or with modification without giving the credit), text (copying from someone else’s published or unpublished work without acknowledging), sources (picking up source name from other’s bibliography without actually going through it).[6] In mosaic plagiarism, the plagiarist uses the sentences of the original author with changes of words in between and adding a few opinions of his own without crediting the original source but the message delivered remains the same. Another type of plagiarism is ‘self-plagiarism’ which is not considered to be as egregious as the plagiarism of ideas or text but still, it is considered illegal. Here the author borrows from his earlier work while writing a new manuscript which is a copyright violation. Since the author has given the copyright to the previous journal or publisher while submitting his

manuscript, he needs their permission if he borrows text from the past publication. The authors need permission to use already published figures, tables, flowchart, etc. from the editor or the publisher before sending it to the journal.[5]

How does plagiarism get detected? The answer is by similarity check software, by the editor, an alert associate editor or an alert peer reviewer and lastly by the reader during post-publication review.[7] What happens if plagiarism is found in a manuscript? COPE has prescribed guideline for both submitted manuscript where plagiarism is found and for published manuscript- the article may be rejected informing the author about plagiarism, the institutional head or responsible person for the research in the institution may be informed. In the case of already published article, the article may be retracted, the senior of the author or the person responsible for research governance at the author's institution may be informed.[2] As far as a journal is concerned where such a manuscript is published, it loses the reader's faith in the aptness of the journal's peer review process in effectively validating papers.[7] Many journals now forbid future submission by the author who is accused of plagiarism for a certain time period.

Now the question comes, how to prevent plagiarism? As English is not the first language in our country and where mugging exactly the lessons since childhood to pass exams is common, many authors are not aware of what constitutes plagiarism and its consequences. The supervisors or thesis guide can play an important role at the very stage of conception or designing of the study, to thesis submission where they can sensitize students about plagiarism and make it a deeply ingrained habit of avoiding plagiarism. The supervisors can make sure that the student has obtained necessary permissions from the copyright holders to use different tools, when necessary which they use in their study. In order to avoid the allegation of misconduct, authors have to make sure that everything in their submission is original as far as possible, using quotation and proper citation even when paraphrasing must be done properly, to respect copyright law by obtaining necessary permissions when required and finally by similarity check software.

The Open Journal of Psychiatry & Allied Sciences (OJPAS®) follows the recommendations given by COPE and WAME. 'About the Journal',[8] given in the website of OJPAS®,[9] asks the author to check the manuscript stringently for any text similarity with any previously published or unpublished work. With the guidelines given by UGC, it will be a requirement that all the higher education institutions will establish a facility to detect plagiarism. The students and their supervisor will need to submit an undertaking that the document was checked with plagiarism detection tool approved by the institution and that the work is free of plagiarism.[1] OJPAS® has made it mandatory for all the authors to submit a similar undertaking when they submit a manuscript for publication.[10] As the acquisition of similarity check software by different universities may take some time, and all the interested author may not have access to such facility, we suggest that they must check their manuscript with at least two different free online software before they submit their manuscript. As the free online software only check similarity with the published material available on the web and not with a recently updated database,

relying on a single free online software cannot always guarantee hundred percent correct result. However, if the manuscript is checked in parts and on different websites, the result is fair enough to be accepted.[11] The editors of OJPAS® always screen the submitted manuscript during the initial assessment and finally before online publication. We request our respected reviewers to also screen every manuscript before they start their assessment.

We will conclude what Steven L. Shafer wrote in his editorial while concluding-

"We are doing our best to prevent you from publishing plagiarized text. We are counting on you to join this effort by screening your own papers. However, if we both fail, and plagiarism appears in the journal, *you will be caught*- Don't plagiarize".[12]

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was supported by India-US Fogarty Training in Chronic Non-Communicable Disorders and Diseases Across Lifespan Grant #1D43TW009120 (SS Bhandari, Fellow; LB Cottler, PI).

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Bhandari SS, Das S. Policy of the Open Journal of Psychiatry & Allied Sciences (OJPAS®) related to plagiarism. *Open J Psychiatry Allied Sci*. 2019;10:1-2. doi: 10.5958/2394-2061.2019.00019.3. Epub 2019 Jan 4.

Source of support: Nil. **Declaration of interest:** First author is the Assistant Editor and second author is the Editor-in-Chief of the Open Journal of Psychiatry & Allied Sciences (OJPAS®).