



# Plagiarism: An important research misconduct

S. M. Yasir Arafat<sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Psychiatry, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, Dhaka, Bangladesh,

<sup>2</sup>Department of Public Health, ASA University, Bangladesh

## Address for correspondence:

S. M. Yasir Arafat, Department of Psychiatry, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, Dhaka, Bangladesh.  
Phone: +88-01713272917. E-mail: arafatmc62@gmail.com

**Received:** October 12, 2016

**Accepted:** January 15, 2017

**Published:** February 05, 2017

## INTRODUCTION

Evidence based medicine is strongly grounded on the scientific publications. Publications should be credible enough as it become the source of reference and any misconduct in publication can toll a huge [1]. Fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism are the three forms of misrepresentation in scientific publication [1,2] and contradicts the principles of good scientific practice [1].

## Definition

The word plagiarism is taken from plagiare; the Latin word meaning to kidnap [1,3-6]. The encyclopedia describes it as “the act of taking the writings of another person and passing them off as one’s own” [3] whereas the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) defines it as “... the use of others’ published and unpublished ideas or words (or other intellectual property) without attribution or permission, and presenting them as new and original rather than derived from an existing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” [3,4,6-8]. The Council of Science Editors defines it as “a form of piracy that involves the use of text or other items (figures, images, and tables) without permission or acknowledgment of the source of these materials” [9]. Plagiarism can be defined as a form of research misconduct which involves “the appropriation of another person’s ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit” [1,2,6,10-19].

## TYPES OF PLAGIARISM

It has been classified in different aspects and based on authorship or source; it can be self-plagiarism and plagiarism from others’ [20]; can be intentional or unintentional due to poor methodology, poor literature review, and language expertize [1].

- A. Plagiarism of text - most common form of plagiarism ascertained by direct copying word for word without citing or quotation marks and that can be found as only copy and paste situations [1-4,6,16,21,22]. This can happen in the case of text, audio or video files and only adequate referencing cannot prevent from this plagiarism [1,21]. It is also mentioned in different names such as verbatim plagiarism, direct plagiarism, and word to word plagiarism [1-4,6,16,21,22].
  - B. Mosaic plagiarism - This plagiarism manifested as borrowing idea and few words or segments from one or multiple sources in a patchy manner with citing properly [1-3,6,16,21,22].
  - C. Self-plagiarism - It is the reusing or resubmitting of own previous substantially similar scientific contents without acknowledging the previous ones for same or different journals [1,3,5-8,10,12,19-24]. It has also variations and found in different categories: (1) Text recycling: Reusing of larger sections of one’s previously published entity without proper citation [10,12,14,24]. (2) Duplicate publication: It happens when substantially similar data, idea, and article with simultaneously to different journals with or without editing; with or without the changing of authorship orders [10,12,14,15,19,20,22,24-26]. Sometimes, it is named as redundant publication or duplicate submission. (3) Augmented publication: This happens when submission of new manuscript after adding few new data with old published data without proper citation [10,12,14,24]. (4) Segmented publication: It is considered when a single original work is divided into multiple manuscripts and publishing as multiple papers [10,12,14,24]. It is also regarded as salami slicing, salami science or salami publishing [12,21,27].
- Self-plagiarism is still debated issue and in some situations, some authors consider that text recycling may be an acceptable practice to certain limit [3,5,7,8,15,19,23]. However, it’s always better to avoid the controversies in regards to the ethical aspects and it’s accusation can

lead to a violent reaction from the author [21]. There are also few misperceptions regarding the ethical issues on duplicate submission as peer review can take much time in some scholarly journals, but it's clearly a part of self-plagiarism [20].

- D. Paraphrasing - It occurs when idea or text is taken from another source with reorganization in own words without acknowledging the primary source [2,3,8,16].

## AUTHORSHIP ABUSES

Recent years the average number of authors has been increased that may be due to increased sophistication of medical research but also may be guest or honorary author phenomena [27]. International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) has mentioned strict criteria for the authorship as (1) "Substantial contributions to conception and design, acquisition of data, or analysis, and interpretation of data"; (2) "drafting the article or revising it critically for important intellectual content"; (3) "final approval of the version to be published" [27,28]. But misuses and abuses of authorship have been found [28]. Gift or honorary authors are considered those are listed in a publication for reasons of authority or as reciprocation for gift authorship [27], and ghost authors are those who have low in the hierarchy, and usually their superiors decide their nonexistence in authorship despite their contribution [25-27,29].

## REASONS FOR PLAGIARISM

Previous literature revealed few reasons for accepting the way of plagiarism such as publish or perish ideology, inappropriate personal ambitions, financial controlling, promotion and academic benefits, language difficulties and low ethical standards, more related with small, and developing economy [1,3,6].

## WAYS OF AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

- Authors should be concerned regarding, the rules of citing references with adequate bibliographic information, acknowledging ideas taken from both formal and informal discussions [1,4,6,13]
- Using quotation marks for more than 6 consecutive words or 7-11 words with an overlapping set of 30 letters [1,4,13,22,30,31]
- Seek permission to use copyright-protected materials [1,13]
- Nurturing utmost ethical practices [1]
- In doubt always provide a citation [1]
- Avoiding salami slicing [22]
- Being familiar as well as compliant with copyright law [22].

## CHECKING PLAGIARISM

Electronic software can be used to check the status and mostly mentionable tools are iThenticate, Turnitin, SafeAssign, CrossCheck, eTBlas, Document Source Analysis, Glatt Plagiarism, Integrigard, EVE2, Copyscape, DupliChecker,

Google, Grammarly, Plagiarism Checker, Plagiarism Detector, PlagTracker, Viper, and WriteCheck [1,4,8,22].

## ORGANIZATIONS WORKING ON PLAGIARISM

There are no universal regulations for plagiarism [1]. There are few organizations working on the issue namely; American Psychological Association, Committee on Publication Ethics Counsel of Science Editors, European Association of Science Editors, European Network of Research Integrity Offices, International Center for Academic Integrity, ICMJE, Modern Language Association, Office of Research Integrity, US Copyright Office, and WAME [22].

## CONCLUSION

Plagiarism is a research misconduct and an assault on integrity of scientific research [32,33]. Authors, reviewers, editors, academicians, faculty, readers and science community need a more cautious approach to deal with plagiarism.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author would like to thank Md. Saleh Uddin for his support.

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**Source of Support: Nil, Conflict of Interest: None declared.**