

Letter To Editor

The ethics of academic research and writing

Dear Editor,

Plagiarism is an act or instance of using or closely imitating the language and thoughts of another author without authorization and the representation of that author's work as one's own without appropriately crediting the original author. This misconduct could be committed recklessly, knowingly, or intentionally.

“Plagiarism by negligence” which extends beyond the conventional definition to include a failure to cite any preceding works that make use of similar concepts, explore similar ideas, or recapitulate similar, even if unoriginal, arguments. The availability of advanced information searching tools increases the probability of viewing most of the previously published papers before publishing any new work. Plagiarism by negligence is still plagiarism [1].

The basic principle for professional conduct of science in all disciplines is honesty towards oneself and towards others. Therefore it is utmost important that the scientific community prevents scientific misconduct by encouraging research integrity. Ethics are moral principles that guide behaviour; in an academic atmosphere, these moral principles are the standard rules of scholarly performance. Intellectual property refers

to creations of the mind. The expression of original ideas is considered intellectual property, and is protected by copyright laws, just like original inventions.

Almost all forms of expression fall under copyright protection as long as they are recorded in some way (such as a book or a computer file). Academic plagiarism is a thorny ethical and practical problem. Perhaps most of the readers have never personally encountered or recognized a case of plagiarism so its immediate interest and relevance may be obscure [2].

Scientific research is performed to find the truth; therefore, honesty is the most important basic

principles of the conduct of science. As a consequence, the major mission of universities must be to convey the principle of honesty to students and staff. Dishonesty, on the other hand, fundamentally contradicts the principle and essence of science, and must be avoided and declared where it occurs [3]. In a global science system research integrity therefore has become a global responsibility, and we need to foster common standards [4].

Scientific Misconduct: Does It Matter/ What's The Problem?

The current definition of scientific misconduct (and one that is used by most universities and publishers) is “fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing research or in reporting research results” [5]. Fabrication is defined as recording or presenting (in any format) fictitious data. Falsification is manipulating data or experimental procedures to produce a desired outcome or to avoid a complicating or inexplicable result. Plagiarism is turning in someone else's work as your own, copying words or ideas from someone else without giving adequate credit to the creator, or failing to cite a source of information [6].

If plagiarism is deception and theft of another's idea, words, work or intellectual property, what is the effect of plagiarism on trust, how is the victim harmed and wronged, and does plagiarism violate the law?

For example, the Landes Bioscience journal *Cancer Biology and Therapy* rejected more than 221 articles for plagiarism in 2012 alone. In Germany, the accusations of plagiarism in writing doctoral dissertations have embroiled two prominent cabinet members which have been forced to resign. Meanwhile, in Canada, Philippines, Romania, and Russian Duma, few high profile cases of plagiarisms have been investigated and the involved persons were forced to step down from their high positions [7].

Plagiarism remains, under all situations, a serious violation of *collegial trust*, the fundamental principle on which the team work or originality of work is based. For whatever reason it occurs, it is a deception and the theft of another's intellectual property. Whether petty or not, flagrant or not, intentional or not, it is a breach of professional ethics that must be exposed and unreservedly criticized [8].

Prevention is better than cure

An act of plagiarism can have several consequences for the researcher, the researcher's academic institution, and the publishing journal. Many institutions have begun to implement courses on the responsible conduct of research, exploring a range of research integrity issues [9]. Although this is a step in the right direction, such instruction benefits mainly undergraduate and postgraduate students. A small number of seasoned researchers would continue to operate without following such instruction. Clearly, research integrity needs to be incorporated into continuing education targeted at this group. Given the above considerations, plagiarism can be managed by focusing on instructional courses or campaigns of prevention and increasing the access to plagiarism-detection tools.

Original Work = Climbing a Mountain

Making an original research or writing an original paper is like climbing a mountain. The plagiarist who is very easily takes the other's idea and imitates previous works would have many publications, achievements and even medals within short period of time. However, when these plagiarists are questioned about the scientific bases of their work, they will not be able to give a meaningful explanation or justification. They might even resort to give reasons which are logically and scientifically not exist. Sometimes they will have nothing accurate to say, because it is always someone else has said it for them.

UiTM plagiarism policy

UiTM is implementing a service called Turnitin which is an Internet-based plagiarism-prevention service created by iParadigms, LLC. Turnitin helps instructors check students' work

for improper citation or potential plagiarism by comparing it against the world's most accurate text comparison database. Validating the originality of submitted work by using plagiarism detection tools would highly reduce the episodes of reproduction and plagiarism, protect the institution's reputation and the author's intellectual property.

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