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PLAGIARISM IN SCIENTIFIC ARTICLES. A BRIEF REVIEW

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Abstract

Plagiarism may take many forms, and its identification may cause both legal and moral consequences. Acknowledging other people's work is a key element of a constructive environment in an academic setting, especially nowadays, when access to information is easy, time is limited, and academics are under pressure to publish or perish. The main aim of this article is to synthesize this concept based on recent guidelines and to detail its most common types. We will discuss: plagiarism with/without intent, the plagiarism of ideas (content plagiarism), of text (form plagiarism), image/ table/ graphic plagiarism, plagiarizing others and self-plagiarism, plagiarism with/without quoting the source material or inadequate quoting of the source material.

Keywords: plagiarism, self-plagiarism, quoting

Introduction

Plagiarism, according to The World Association of Medical Editors (WAME), represents "the use of others' published and unpublished ideas or words (or other intellectual property) without attribution or permission, and presenting them as new and original rather than derived from an existing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. 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the ideas or words are taken from abstracts, research grant applications, institutional review board applications, or unpublished or published manuscripts in any publication format (print or electronic)"(WAME, 2019). According to Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) we can discuss about plagiarism "When somebody presents the work of others (data, words or theories) as if they were his/her own and without proper acknowledgment"(Wager, 2011), while according to The Office of Research Integrity (ORI), USA, "plagiarism includes both the theft or misappropriation of intellectual property and the substantial unattributed textual copying of another's work"(ORI, 1994).

Plagiarism may take many forms, and its presence can lead to both legal and moral consequences. In scientific articles, plagiarism may be caused by the improper use of text (with the severity of plagiarism often being a function of quantity and similitude with the original), images, tables or graphics(Hostiuc, & Curca, 2012). Acknowledging other people's work is a critical element of a constructive environment in an academic setting.

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Nowadays, any scientific study should have a certain degree of originality to be recognized by the mainstream international scientific community; however, it also has to rely on previous works in the field, which the new study has to develop in a specific way, making literature research an essential component of article writing.

To avoid plagiarism, the authors may use various forms in which to integrate information from other sources, the foremost being paraphrasing, summarizing and taking information literally (using quotes). If the information that has to be carried over is reproduced in another study, the authors have the duty to research the source material (and if it is impossible, to mention this in the study) (Hostiuc, & Curca, 2012; Roig, 2015).

Next, we will present some criteria used in classifying various forms of text plagiarism.

1. WAME Committee on publication Ethics' opinions in what concerns plagiarism

According to WAME, plagiarism occurs when ideas/ words are taken from abstracts, research financing requests, committee applications for institutional revisions, published/ unpublished studies in paper or electronic format or any other form of using copyrighted text without the adequately quoting (when necessary) without having the approval to use said elements(WAME, 2019).

The same organization defines self-plagiarism as the instance in which an author uses fragments of his own already published works on the same subject, without properly referencing them. This situation is not rare, being often unintentional and there are no detailed regulations in use (for example there are no clear mentions regarding the number of reused words to cause self-plagiarism). Self-plagiarism can also be a form of copyright infringement (WAME, 2019). The severity is however considered lower comparing to improperly taking others' intellectual property, as it is challenging to rephrase your ideas multiple times, and as it is normal to use similar ideas in different contexts. For example, a conference paper can be easily developed into a scientific article; a scientific article can be easily converted into a book chapter; with the exchange of the type of scientific paper, the ideas remain the same, and only a small part of the structure changes. If the previous work is properly referenced, and there are differences, even minor, between papers, this cannot be considered a form of self-plagiarism. This however is not the case when the same author uses an idea/study/result to publish multiple scientific papers that are highly similar. In this case, we can more easily talk about self-plagiarism, as the main aim of the authors is not to increase the visibility of their results by using various means of communication, but rather to inflate the number of original articles that actually lack originality.

2. COPE (Committee On Publication Ethics) Criteria referring to plagiarism

According to COPE, plagiarism can be minor/less severe or major/ severe depending on the size of the copied text (the bigger it is, the more severe the plagiarism is), its degree of originality, context (depends of the plagiarized section - for example plagiarizing the results of a study is severe, while copying verbatim the materials and methods from another study, with which these are shared is a minor offence at best), intent (it is severe when plagiarism is done intentionally), the way previous works are quoted (the reference list and in text citations can be inadequate, incomplete, unclear or even absent), the experience the authors have in publishing, native language (it is a greater risk to plagiarize an article in the same language as the source article)(Wager, 2011).

Finally, Cope has released the following criteria for minor and major plagiarism:

Table 1 Severity of plagiarism("Plagiarism," 2008; Wager, 2011)

Major plagiarism	***Minor plagiarism***
• Copying results/data obtained by someone else without their approval	• Copying less than 100 consecutive words without mentioning the source

• Using a study in its entirety (translated or not) • Copying more than 100 consecutive words without quoting the source material • Unauthorized use of the structure or • The concept of a research study, when the same elements of a study are also present in another, with existing proof to back this up	material. An exception is highly standardized texts • Using a slightly modified text of over 100 words, with or without quoting it

A classification of plagiarism

Depending on the intent to plagiarize, there can be:

- **Intentional plagiarism** (intentionally using/ copying without quoting);
- **Unintentional plagiarism** (usually by using improper quoting methods or inadequately paraphrasing, summarizing (Kumar, Priya, Musalaiah, & Nagasree, 2014)).

In most cases, it is difficult to establish a clear limit between these two situations, as there are overlapping elements of both present.

Per primam, plagiarism is considered to be done with intent. The lack of intent cannot be justified by not knowing the rules of good practice in publishing or of the legal dispositions in this topic (Ministerul Cercetării și Inovării, Consiliul Național de Etică a Cercetării Științifice, 2017; Hostiuc, & Curca, 2012; *Legea 206/2004*, n.d.).

Depending on the type of material that is plagiarized, we can talk about plagiarism of ideas, of text-based content, and of graphical-based content (graphs, images, tables).

Plagiarism of ideas appears when a researcher is using an author's ideas/ arguments without proper referencing.

Text plagiarism appears when are used various sized portions of text, using copy-paste (the text being translated or not), paraphrasing it to close to the original, or when using multiple, smaller texts from various authors cropped in a puzzle (mosaic plagiarism).

Graphical-based content plagiarism appears when the authors used tables, graphs or images from other sources, without adequately referencing them, and without obtaining a proper consent for their use from the copyright holders (except for content under particular types of licenses such as Creative Commons or GNU). This consent is mandatory, as these types of works are considered highly original, and each dot from them is considered equivalent with a letter from a text. Other types of plagiarism are presented in the table below.

Table 2 Other types of plagiarism (modified, after(NYW Libraries, 2018))

Examples
• *Improper referencing.* Using just the name of the authors without mentioning anything else about the source of the study. This renders the source study impossible to find • *Inadequate paraphrasing.* The source material is correctly quoted, but the text used is almost identical to the one in the source text without the use of commas, therefore • *No referencing.* Paraphrasing, summarizing or quoting is adequate but there is no trace to the source material • *Improper quoting of some text*. All sources are adequately quoted but there are some ideas paraphrased from the same source without citing • Using synonyms and modifying the order of the words in a phrase while keeping the

structure

- *Ghostwriting without proper attribution* -the person involved in writing the paper is not mentioned(Barbour, 2009)

Discussion

Plagiarism alters academic integrity, generates a lack of transparency in publishing and puts into discussion the honesty of the author who has resorted to plagiarism. It may lead to legal repercussions but also to academic ones (such as the impossibility to access funds, losing tenure, *etc*.). It also has significant consequences for the original author, whose work was not correctly recognized, rendering him unable to fully benefit from the opportunities and advantages of his/her work (Fusch, Ness, Booker, & Fusch, 2017).

Due to the severe consequences for the author accused of plagiarism, these allegations have to be proven, by specialized committees, before being made public, as even a rumor about it may cause significant, detrimental consequences, even if his rumor might, later on, be refuted.

Identifying plagiarism can be done manually, using automated means (specialized software) or sometimes a simple Google search (that can indicate similarity in texts). If however the plagiarism is detected using a software algorithm, it has to be confirmed manually as sometimes a software can make improper connections, implying to be a plagiarism where there is none (e.g., when big chunks of the reference list are seen as similar to other text, the cause being a similarity in the citing style). Some examples of automated software are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Plagiarism detection software

Plagiarism detection software	
Paper Rater	Grammar, spelling, style verification andplagiarism detection. (*https://www.paperrater.com/*, n.d.)
Ithenticate	"is developed by Turnitin, the biggest plagiarism detector for educational institutions and has a database of over 60 billion web pages and 155 million content items, including 49 million works from 800 scholarly publisher participants of *Crossref Similarity Check*" (*http://www.ithenticate.com/*, n.d.)
Déjà vu database	compares the abstract of the item being verified with the abstracts in the database
CrossCheck	uses iThenticate software

Conclusions

This paper has attempted to describe some of the more frequently encountered types of plagiarism, their definitions, and some practical issues, to be taken into account by researchers when writing scientific papers.

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