

## **Analysing the Factors Leading to Plagiarism Amongst Researchers: An Exploratory Approach**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Understanding the challenge that Plagiarism and its defeating consequences are on the overall quality of research, institutional reputation, Country's competitiveness, demotivation to the researcher and lack of confidence it poses on the researcher understanding the underlying assumptions, causes, awareness and possible strategies to overcome this menace is pivotal.*

*With the understanding of numerous incident at Global level and consistently rising Pressure on institutions on quality research and innovativeness in research it is pertinent to note that Plagiarism in its different forms needs an immediate attention to be understood by all concerned. It demands an attitudinal and policy imperative so that building research strength, academic honesty, ethical research and an overall environment towards effectual research work can be build. With this as a background the purpose of the present study is to identify amongst researchers in different disciplines the understanding towards plagiarism, reasons of it and also differences in plagiarism as per discipline.*

*From the analysis of study, it was found that majority respondents were aware about what plagiarism is and its different forms are and also about rules and regulations framed by their institution. It was also found that majority of them avoided plagiarism in different ways. The gaps redressed emphasize that an academic environment which is transparent and frequent discussion on this issue is deeply needed. Also pressure on writing research papers, lack of competitiveness, poor collaborative research work and lack of trainings, orientation and exposure to such knowledge are a major determinant of plagiarism.*

*It was also seen that irrespective of the disciplines majority researchers had common understanding about plagiarism.*

*Thus the study provides clues for institution to identify the reasons behind plagiarism, problems and challenges of their researchers and efforts aimed at maximizing quality research and access to valuable resources to be innovative in research.*

**Keywords:** Plagiarism, forms of plagiarism, Unethical academic behaviour, Intentional and unintentional plagiarism, Academic Integrity.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

The word plagiarism refers to literary theft or a kind of academic dishonesty that challenges several aspects like honesty, integrity, accountability and fairness which challenges the quality, fairness and contribution toward research. The principle focuses that whatever work is being done should be done on the principles of fairness, ethics and transparency, right utility of available resources and self satisfaction. In order to maintain Academic Integrity awareness about plagiarism, its different forms, methods to avoid, creating a culture of transparency and helping researchers to avoid and properly acknowledge referred material for avoiding plagiarism should be practiced.

In the Dictionary of Etymology, the word plagiarism, which means “literary theft”, is explained as coming from the English word “plagiary” (‘one who wrongfully takes another’s words or ideas’), derived from the Latin plagiaries (‘kidnapper, seducer, plunderer, literary thief’), from platinum (kidnapping) from plagal (snare, net). The Compact Oxford English Dictionary (2009) defines plagiarism as the act of “taking the work or idea of someone else and pass it off as one’s own.” In literature, plagiarism is defined as “a form of intellectual theft”

Plagiarism is most dreadful experience one can experience in academic ethics as due to this the scholarly work gets undermined and it demotivates the originality of work. This in turn affects the academic culture of an organization. It is important that institutions should focus on building a culture of academic integrity so that this deterrence can be regulated. Bertram Gallant and Kalichman maintain that “individual misconduct is actually a systemic issue, shaped by individual, organisational, educational/academy, and societal factors.

This requires a holistic approach with efforts of all the stakeholders involved so that an effective future centric and output driven approach for maintaining research standards can be achieved. A complete check on factors that lead to plagiarism should be first understood and then with an open discussion and open mind jointly efforts and plans to design suitable strategies to overcome this should be initiated.

It is also important to review and classify what kind of plagiarism is it whether intentional or unintentional. For example, Intentional plagiarism may include- Direct chunking-which means directly copying a chunk of others ideas or writing as it is.

Undesirable Paraphrasing which refers to exceeding the limits as suggested for paraphrasing. It can also be Self plagiarism which means referring to one’s own work many a time or as per Wikipedia it can be explained as the reuse of significant, identical, or nearly identical portions of one’s own work without acknowledging that one is doing so or citing the original work is sometimes described as “self-plagiarism”; the term “recycling fraud” is also used for this. The other form is Collusion in which knowingly allow any of your academic work to be acquired by another person for presentation as if it were that person’s own work.

Similarly, is the Unintentional paraphrasing which can be in form of Misunderstood citation, cut copy and paste, group projects, improper paraphrasing, different cultural background, wrong footnote and citation, Inclusive copying, Compound Copying etc.

Similarly, important is to curb plagiaristic behaviour as other behaviour similarly an effective antecedent and consequence for effective behaviour assessment with the help of tools like Functional Behavioural assessment can be done so as to determine what are the causes behind such behaviour.

Thus, the present study aims at determining on the basis of theoretical views and data collected the possible understanding, reasons of plagiarism.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE:**

According to McShane and Von Glow, Sullivan et.al (2005) plagiarism also has lot to do foundationally with ethics as the basic problem which leads to unethical practice is lack of ethical concerns. It is dependent one ethical outcome of an action that one believes. In line with Mc Shane and Von Glinow similar contribution is made by Sullivan that it depends on ethical theory and ethical principle. It depends on ethical principles, obligations and reason of copying or unethical behaviour. It is also related to Moral intensity and ethical sensitivity of a person that decides the ethical behaviour.

The role of easily accessible technology also plays an important role in promoting copying behaviour. In the study conducted by McKenzie (1999) reports that majority teachers consider the role of technology is making it easier for learners to plagiarize. With easy access everyone without much reading can document things demanding no efforts and originality. Thus, it affects literature as nothing new happens only extension of similar work happens.

Another important determinant affecting plagiarism is the culture of the institution. Ashworth, Freewood, and Macdonald (2003) in their study emphasized the significant role of cultural element which decides to a large extent cultural environment and adaptation as a factor of promoting or discouraging plagiarism. Also the changes in the assessment ways and exams also affect the growth of plagiarism.

Theory and perception based on Utilitarianism as an idea has a lot to do with plagiarism as this thought process focuses more on seeking highest degree of satisfaction. (Sullivan & Pecorino, 2002) This theory affects this problem as its most important element is consequences and not the process thus promoting this unethical behaviour. If the focus of the institution is on outcome at any cost without ethical considerations thus earning a degree or achieving better grade as the only primary focus will lead to affecting learner’s performance.

The theory of Kant since (1700) has put a different approach with respect to causes of plagiarism as he proposes that it is not only the consequence but the intention of the person. Moral law is considered by Kant to be an

instinctive sense, something that is part of our conscious or even deeper than our conscious. Moral law is the source of human freedom and autonomy and is derived from human reason within oneself. Kant sees the basis for the theory of good as what lies in the intention or the will of a person. In this case, the decision or act is morally praiseworthy and done out of the sense of what is right rather than what the consequences.

The contribution and role of Social factors is also considered to be an important determinant of plagiarism in which the role of parents, teacher, society, individual themselves and the absence of punishment plays a role in this. In his study Bushweller (1999) reports that many educators consider the erosion of ethics in our self-centred society as the reason why learners are increasingly cheating. Other educators consider the rise in learner collaboration as a factor, while still others blame teachers for not caring or not bothering to deal with cheating. Finally, some blame the parents who don't hold their children accountable if they are caught cheating. In reality, there are a number of social factors that could influence learner cheating in higher education.

Peirce and Allshouse (1999) gave a new approach to reasons of plagiarism attributing this to the type of work environment of an institution. They stated that depending on whether the institution has a competitive or collaborative work environment decides the extent of moral principles and avoidance of copying. Peer pressure, insensitivity, insecurity, over perfection are also the reasons of plagiarism. Academic integrity thus depends on the kind of environment maintained.

There have been several studies that talk about how gender makes a difference in academic integrity. Studies conducted by Cizek (1999) concludes that females have admitted to academic dishonesty as often as males under certain circumstances. In addition to gender, Cizek (1999) and McCabe and Trevino (1997) have reported data on the impact age may have on the engagement of academic dishonesty. In both cases, the researchers have found that the engagement of academic dishonesty decreases as age increases and non-traditional learners tend to cheat less than traditional aged learners.

Another important reason quotes promoting plagiarism apart from technology and culture is this has become a source of earning of living. According to Standler (2001), the commercial sale of term papers is quite old as 1960 where different people take this as a research services.

As per study of (Dante, 2010) many people in this profession have written more than 5000 pages by getting decent amount thus making their living. The topics may be highly customized as well as generic. Such services are present in many ways and are thus minting money. As the customers are highly rise it is becoming difficult to control. Fain and Bates (2002) quotes it as links to paper mill sites available for learner access. There also has been progress to control and improvise this unethical practice by usage of proper tools and software e.g Turnitin , The Centre for Intellectual Property (2002) at University of Maryland University College also developed a Faculty and Administrators Guide to Detection Tools and Methods. Several detection sites, including turnitin.com were profiled.

Another important aspect that affects growth of plagiarism is lack of understanding of plagiarism. Various studies emphasize the fact that much of the problem persists because there are several ways in which a person perceives plagiarism. A Study conducted by Gulliver & Tyson, (2010) talks about this problem due to difference in perception. This shortcoming brings about an important dispersion about what actions are needed when faced with plagiarism and when they need to be implemented. Thus, the development of an adequate understanding of plagiarism as a form of academic misconduct continues to be advocated by many scholars (Gunnarsson, Kulesza, & Pettersson, 2014). Similar to these are the study conducted by Flint et al. (2006) who tried to assess the impact of lecturers' perceptions and knowledge about practices that were considered plagiarism. They found that there are huge differences in perception of professors and institutional efforts to curb it.

One other important aspect that relates and makes this issue complex is differentiating Collusion and Plagiarism. Barrett and Cox (2005) explored the differences in perceptions between plagiarism and collusion. They found that collusion is a joint replication by any person in a collaborative research whereas plagiarism is an individual offense. Different studies also highlight about differences in plagiarism and improper rephrasing, cutting and pasting, rephrasing as a mode of plagiarism and need of making people aware about these form of plagiarized tools.

According to a new dimension by Lampert (2004) discussed role of Librarians and Discipline teachers in setting an environment and helping an ethical culture to grow. This requires training and understanding of all stakeholders so as to avoid any kind of unethical practice.

Thus based on the selected reviews it is clear that most important is to identify that whether clarity on what is plagiarism and its types itself is first important. It depends largely on cultural factors, institutional environment, policies and procedure, technology availability, infrastructural support, ethical mind set, expectations of institutions etc.

## **METHODOLOGY:**

### **Research problem:**

Plagiarism is a serious concern for academic ethic led by multiple factors

### **Research Questions:**

Based on the theoretical understanding and the literature it is evident that several factors contribute towards plagiarized behaviour or reasons of unethical practice among academicians. The major research questions included aspects like -

Q.1 What is the understanding of academicians about plagiarism?

Q.2 How is the awareness level about plagiarism?

Q.3. What are the causes of Plagiaristic behaviour?

Q.4 Does the plagiarism behaviour differ with respect to the streams of discipline of the academicians?

## **OBJECTIVES OF STUDY**

1.To understand the attitude of academicians towards plagiarism.

2.To understand if the plagiarism behaviour varies as per the discipline of study or not.

3.To understand the reasons behind plagiarism

## **HYPOTHESIS:**

### **Hypothesis 1:**

H01: There is no clear understanding about plagiarism amongst academicians

Ha1: There is a clear understanding about plagiarism amongst academicians

### **Hypothesis 2:**

H02: There is no significant difference in behaviour of academicians with respect to their discipline

Ha2: There is significant difference in behaviour of academicians with respect to their discipline

### **Hypothesis 3:**

H03: There is no significant reasons in factors of plagiarism amongst researchers

Ha3: There is significant reasons in factors of plagiarism amongst researchers

**Type of research:** Exploratory

**Type of Sampling:** Census method

**Tools Used:** Descriptive statistics

**Sample Size:**150

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION:**

For the present study since the aim was to determine different factors and also to assess if as per specialization whether the behaviour of academicians remains same or different with respect to plagiarism thus the questionnaire was distributed to academicians from different background in selected universities in Faridabad.

Total 200 questionnaires were distributed to Research assistants of different streams viz Education, Management, Engineering ,Law, Basic Sciences Physical Education and Sports. The response rate is 81% (162) received questionnaire out of which 9 were not filled completely and thus were dropped and thus 150 questionnaire were considered for further study.

Out of the sample the demographic break up was as follows-

**Table 1: Demographic Break up of respondents**

<b>Gender wise break up</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Male	85	57%
Female	65	43%
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	

Out of the collected response the streams they belonged to were as follows-

**Table 2: Break up as per streams/discipline**

Stream	N	%
Engineering	30	21%
Management	28	19%
Law	21	14%
Education	28	19%
Basic Science	24	16%
Sports and Physical Education	19	13%

It was seen from the break up that 21% of the research assistant were from Engineering domain, 19% from management area, 14% of from law, 19% from education, 16% from Basic Science. 13% from physical and sports education thus catering to a diverse sample covering multiple streams.

Out of all respondents 62 were Enrolled in Phd Program and 43 were already Doctorate and remaining 45 respondents were planning to do PhD program.

**Table 3: Status of respondents**

Status of Respondents	N	%
Enrolled in PhD program	62	41%
Already Completed Doctoral program	43	28%
Planning to do PhD	45	30%

Thus from the above Table 3 it is clear that since the status of respondents were different hence the expected outcomes from the objectives of study also should be different. Since majority people are research scholars it is expected that they should be aware about the issues in plagiarism necessarily.

#### **Design:**

The questionnaire was designed keeping in view the factors identified from the literature review. Initially 28 items were designed to measure the stated objectives but after discussion with expert to establish the expert validity it was reduced to 20 items only. The dropped items were either not relevant or were a repetition of the other stated items.

The Cronbach Alpha value of the chosen items came to be 0.76 which states high reliability for internal consistency of the chosen items. The items were developed on the basis of available literature on assessing knowledge and comprehension levels. Few changes based on the requirement of the test were done in the language of the items for better clarity. The scale of measurement was Likert and results were analysed using SPSS 17.0.

#### **Objective 1: The first objective that aimed at knowing the understanding of researchers towards plagiarism based on the questionnaire the following was observed-**

1. Majority respondents were aware (Mean value 4.25) of the concept of plagiarism as this is the most important concern for all the academicians, researchers.
2. Majority respondents agree that there should be stringent action against plagiarism and that it should be avoided in all possible senses, (mean value 4.23, 4.22)
3. It was also an important observation that majority respondents were aware about university rules and regulations about plagiarism and had not contacted anyone for any assistance for writing. This reflects an ethical attitude of academicians, researchers towards their work. (Mean value 4.19, 4.13)
4. It was seen that majority of respondents agreed that they every time tried to avoid plagiarism by all means. It was also observed that majority respondents had avoided plagiarism. This indicates that awareness about plagiarism is good amongst the researchers. Mean value (4.04, 4.02)
5. It was further noted that majority respondents also agreed that they don't forget to mention references in their writings so as to avoid plagiarism (Mean value 3.89).
6. It was further noted that respondents also agreed that it is difficult to replace other's words to put own idea (Mean value 3.62) and also parallel they are aware of the methods to avoid plagiarism 3.41 and 3.24.

7. Majority respondents were also less agreeing on that university should be little flexible on policy of plagiarism (Mean value 2.87)
8. Majority respondents also agreed that their related bosses, reporting relationship are all concerned about plagiarism and that not many researchers exactly copy to other's views from internet (Mean Value 2.71, 2.68)
9. It was surprising to note that the role of superiors in making them aware about plagiarism is not that much thus needs to be improved. (Mean Value 2.19)
10. Finally it was appreciating to note that everybody had a concern for plagiarism and that majority have not plagiarized the content for their research work (mean Value 1.88 & 1.18)

**Table 4: Descriptive Statistics Related to the Prospective Academicians Views' on Plagiarism**

Different items about plagiarism	M	SD
I always ensure putting reference in my papers	3.89	1.10
In my opinion plagiarism should be avoided in every sense	4.23	.57
I'm well conversant with concept of plagiarism	4.25	.62
In my opinion Universities should take serious action against plagiarism and spread awareness about it	4.22	.74
I have never contacted any outside agency to write something on my behalf	4.13	1.21
I know about the rules and regulations of my university about ethics	4.19	1.26
I have every time successfully avoided plagiarism	4.02	.75
I'm aware of necessary steps to avoid plagiarism	3.12	1.02
I have avoided plagiarizing in all my writings	4.04	.93
It is difficult to replace other's word to put own ideas	3.62	1.12
Avoiding plagiarism is quite easier	2.42	1.87
I'm aware about procedure of seeking permission to re-use anyone work	3.41	1.06
I'm well aware about how to avoid plagiarism	3.24	1.23
The punishment for plagiarizing should not be too much if it is consequentially not a heavy loss	2.87	1.10
Not everybody is bothered if I plagiarize or not	2.71	1.28
I think plagiarism is been largely talked by my superior	2.19	1.31
I have referred to internet also and taken same views in my work	2.68	.92
I have referred at some time or other from other's work	1.88	.84
Plagiarism is a generic think till anyone discovers	1.18	.62

Thus, from the above table and set objective it is quite clear that majority people were aware about plagiarism and did not supported it as an academic unethical practice. Also the universities had their stated norms for avoiding the same. It was also found that plagiarism is well understood amongst the academicians and try to always avoid it in every form, they are serious about the issue of plagiarism and are also aware of the institutional rules and regulations of the same. It was also seen that improvement in the area of making researchers aware about it and regular monitoring and training on this aspect is important.

Thus, as per the first objective it is clear that understanding about plagiarism is visibly seen in the academicians. Thus, based on the set hypothesis and above analysis it is clear that the null hypothesis that stated that there is no understanding about plagiarism amongst researchers stands rejected.

#### **Objective No 2: The second objective aimed at understanding whether based on their streams the attitude towards plagiarism varied ANOVA was used to measure whether**

In order to find this based on their streams significant difference was found so as to see whether there is significant difference in test scores between groups in terms of their department. It was cross verified that assumptions are correct before analysis. From Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests it was clear that normality assumption was met and based on Levene's test of error variance of Homogeneity which came to less than .05 there were equal variances amongst the groups. Thus the variance of homogeneity was also met and error variance found was  $p > .05$  that indicated equal error variances. Thus it was clear that there was no significant difference in the scores attained by the respondents with regard to their department.

Thus, the second objective which aimed at understanding the difference in scores based on department was achieved. Based on the analysis the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between different streams and behaviour towards plagiarism stands accepted.

**Objective 3: The third and last objective of the study was to find out the reasons behind plagiarism.**

Based on the identified statements the percentage based on opinion of respondents were as follows-

**Table 5: Opinion of Respondent on factors affecting plagiarism**

S.n	Factor	Response	%
1	Less research experience and interest	14	9%
2	Lack of understanding of subject/topic	10	7%
3	Pressure on writing research papers	21	14%
4	Lack of time due to other administrative jobs	11	7%
5	lack of awareness about different forms of plagiarism	13	9%
6	Poor academic culture and no discussion on plagiarism	15	10%
7	Lack of creativity in thinking new dimensions about the topic	11	7%
8	lack of punishment for the plagiarism	9	6%
9	Competition at the work place	11	7%
10	Lack of guidance by superior	9	6%
11	No formal guidance or orientation for plagiarism	16	11%
12	Lack of academic resource support at library to refer new topics and thus replicate	10	7%

From the above table it is quite clear that the major reasons behind the reasons of plagiarism were as follows (top 5 reasons)-

1. Pressure on writing research
2. No formal guidance or orientation for plagiarism
3. Poor academic culture and no discussion on plagiarism
4. 4.1 lack of awareness about different forms of plagiarism,  
4.2 Lack of academic resource support at library to refer new topics and thus replicate  
4.3 Competition at the work place
- 4.4 Lack of creativity in thinking new dimensions about the topic
5. Lack of guidance by superior

Thus more or less it can be understood that majority factors were related to lack of guidance and sought support from superiors. Also it was observed from the table that awareness, no formal training, lack of guidance, competition at workplace, pressure on writing papers were the most important reasons of plagiarising. Thus it is important for the management to identify the possible strategies to curb this and motivate everyone by making them aware, participating in such discussion and based on work pressure and necessary requirement allot work and targets. It should be aimed to enhance collaborative research so that effectively it can be done in most effective means.

Thus the hypothesis that there is no difference in priority towards factors affecting plagiarism among researchers stands rejected and it is agreed that everybody has a different opinion for the same.

**OUTCOMES OF STUDY:**

1. From the above study based on the framed objectives it can be understood that plagiarism is a common concern and a challenge for everyone.
2. It is important not only the reasons leading to promoting it but more important is to assess whether the people are clear with what plagiarism is and its different forms.
3. It was seen that majority respondents realized the significance of avoiding plagiarism and were also aware that their universities have framed rules for same. From the study can be seen that majorly irrespective of differences in the stream of the respondents all hold similar opinion about the reason of plagiarism.
4. It is important that suitable interventions like knowledge about plagiarism detector, usage and access to these tools should be provided to researchers.
5. It is important that regular orientation programs for developing creativity, collaborative research, open discussion and motivation on writing quality and not quantity in research volumes should be promoted.
6. The research scholars and other academicians should be provided additional support for access to appropriate sources for doing effective research. Also any discrepancy should be handled with care in case of any unethical academic behaviour but it should be strictly communicated.

7. Amongst the research scholar's collaborative groups should be created so that promoting mutual research can be done. The guide or the professor should themselves update their understanding on the same and parallel pass the same to their scholars /students.
8. It is also important that by way of feedback, open discussion problems in doing research should be discussed and solution to be intervened.

This overall will help in improving quality of research, confidence of researchers, better academic work environment, mutual work, improving relationship and utilizing the research skills effectively.

## CONCLUSION:

Thus, based on the framed objectives and hypothesis it can be concluded that plagiarism as a challenge needs a strategic and tactful approach wherein systematically reasons behind intentional and unintentional plagiarism, types of plagiarism, consequences and possible ways to curb it should be understood. Since there are multiple factors contributing to it as per the culture, demands and pressure of the institution the remedies have to be customized as per the internal environment and thus also meeting the academic standards, procedures and thus avoiding academic dishonesty.

It is very important that right from institutional level for students, academicians, researcher's plagiarism in any and every form and its procedures of avoiding should be briefed and reiterated to the concerned stakeholders so that unintentional plagiarism, self-plagiarism etc. can also be avoided. The root cause of the copying or ideating others and many such forms of this unethical behaviour has to be stopped for the purpose of making a distinct name of our country and in reality contributing towards genuine research which is problem driven and helpful.

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