Editorial

The ethics of plagiarism

Wikipedia has defined plagiarism, with reference to the Random House Dictionary and the Oxford English Dictionary, as "the fraudulent representation of another person's language, thoughts, ideas, or expressions as one's own original work." In research, such representations are unethical, and generally considered misconduct. Therefore, it is subject to sanctions and punishments.

Plagiarism has been classified in several ways. According to Liles and Rozalski, there are five types: (a) copy and paste plagiarism, (b) word switch plagiarism, (c) style plagiarism, (d) metaphor plagiarism, and (e) idea plagiarism. The names of these types are very much self-explanatory. One must keep in mind that self-plagiarism is also unacceptable. The spectrum of plagiarism starts from unintentional/accidental use to an intentional claim of others work as own and ranges up to a deliberate claim of another's work as own. Considering the whole rubric of plagiarism, the Committee on Publication Ethics provided examples of major plagiarism: (a) unattributed copying of another person's data/findings, (b) verbatim copy of >100 words, (c) unattributed use of original/published work, and idea/hypothesis, (d) verbatim copy <100 words without a quotation from the original work, and (d) close copying (not verbatim) of significant sections (e.g., >100 words) from another work (whether that work is cited).

Although allegation has been increasing with the availability of online source materials, its sensitivity varies across countries and institutes. The University of Dhaka recently adopted a policy to punish violators. It is a logical sequence that other universities, including the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU), will adopt sanctions or punishments shortly for the offence of plagiarism. The BSMMU Journal, like other standard journals, do routine plagiarism checks for all submissions. Manuscripts that exceed an agreed threshold of plagiarized texts are sent back to the authors for re-writing. This makes the review process time inefficient.

The shortcut of copy-paste can be prevented only if the idea of writing comes from one's brain. The potential authors need to read critically and extensively the available literature to generate ideas.

M Mostafa Zaman

Ekhlaspur Centre of Health, Chandpur, Bangladesh

Email: mmostafazaman@gmail.com

ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1736-1342

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