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Plagiarism: An academic crime

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ABSTRACT

Plagiarism in academics has become a growing problem throughout the world. The paper aims to discuss with an overview of plagiarism. The author also highlights on various other issues namely academic offences, UGC guidelines, preventive measures, standardize policies to safeguard students – from the point of view of plagiarism. Author also throws light on the emerging role of librarians in order to protect students from committing plagiarism.

Keywords: Cyber Plagiarism, Citation Styles, Fishbone Diagram.

1. INTRODUCTION

Plagiarism is an academic dishonesty which is rampanting across the world. People are writing books, submitting dissertations, sending papers in various national or international journals / seminars / conferences. They should have sound ideas regarding plagiarism in order to safeguard themselves from possible defamation or dangers. Sources of original contributors should be acknowledged very honestly. Acknowledgement can be given either through citations or through bibliographical entries.

2. HISTORY OF PLAGIARISM

The term plagiarism is of ancient origin. The practice of copying or compiling something consulting other's work or ideas was not considered as crime in the distant past. However this attitude started changing after the enactment of Copyright Laws. In order to protect the interest of book publishers against pirated work, British parliament enacted the Statute of Anne in 1709. Shakespeare, Benjamin Franklin, T.S. Eliot, Stephen Ambrose, Martin Luther King (Jr), and many other eminent persons have fallen within the dark circle of plagiarism, because they copied or extracted things from earlier works. With the introduction of computers, a paradigm shift took place from analog to digital world. The cases of plagiarism exponentially increased thereafter because of the availability of plethora of information in the dot com environment. Copying and downloading from Internet and presenting those digitized information as his / her original contribution (without acknowledging the original author) given birth to the concept to Cyber Plagiarism.

3. UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT

The word plagiarism is derived from a Latin word plagiare, which means kidnap. Plagiarism is the act of illegal copying of words, sentences, ideas or images from the work of an author or many authors without giving due acknowledgement, rather pretending as if the thought content is his /her original one. Plagiarism is an academic dishonesty from published or unpublished work. There are four different levels of plagiarism shown below in the following table (no.1)

Table 1: Different levels of plagiarism

S no.	Degree ranging within (%)	level
1	< 10	Zero
2	10 - 40	Low
3	40 - 60	Mild
4	> 60	High

Plagiarism takes place due to some reasons namely – inadequate language skills, lack of confidence, enormous work pressure, laziness, inadequate study habits, poor time management skills, improper or inadequate referencing, lack of knowledge for referencing, self-plagiarism. Plagiarism may be either intentional or unintentional.

4. TYPES OF PLAGIARISM

There are different types of plagiarisms. Discussion regarding some of those varieties have been carried out in a nut shell.

- **Direct plagiarism:** If anybody tries to copy word by word without giving any credit to the original author, then it falls under the category of Direct Plagiarism. Oxford Lexicon defined the term verbatim as “In exactly the same words as were used originally”. Hence Direct Plagiarism is also known as Verbatim Plagiarism.
- **Inaccurate authorship:** It results – (a) if the name of contributor of original source is not mentioned at all (b) credit is given to somebody who is not the actual contributor (c) if credit is not given to all authors in case of multiple authorship.
- **Complete plagiarism:** If a student entirely copies an assignment or a paper from a source and claims it as if his/her credit, then it will be considered as a case for complete plagiarism.
- **Mosaic plagiarism:** It involves taking concept from one or different sources and presenting it with one’s own way.
- **Collaboration Plagiarism:** If the name of a person be included as one of the authors even when he / she did not contribute anything, then this type of plagiarism is known as collaboration Plagiarism.
- **Hired Plagiarism:** Here someone is managed or hired to write a project work or a paper and the matter is submitted claiming that the work is his/her original contribution or thought content.
- **Paraphrasing Plagiarism:** Paraphrasing means writing something using someone else work by modifying sentences and words without giving actual credit to the original source.
- **Self-Plagiarism:** It is a bad practice of reproduction (either whole or partial) of one’s own previously published work for another assignment.
- **Borrowed Plagiarism:** It’s also plagiarism to borrow essays from friends. You may have older friends who have taken course years before from a different instructor. If you use a paper or part of a paper written by a friend for a past course, this is considered borrowed plagiarism.

5. PLAGIARISM DETECTING SOFTWARE

Wide varieties of plagiarism software have been floated over Internet. Some of them are commercial which are available on trial basis. Good number of plagiarism software are available free of cost. A short discussion about some of them is as follows-

- **Duplichecker:** It is plagiarism detection tools which is available free of cost. It is user friendly software. It imparts good result with sentences comprising of fewer words (1000 words). It can check also spelling and grammar. It supports - doc, docx, rtf, open office, pdfs etc.
- **Turnitin:** It is web-based text-matching commercial software which works with DOC, DOCX, Corel WordPerfect, HTML, Adobe PostScript, Plain text, Rich Text Format (RTF), Portable Document Format (PDF) files. Turnitin covers wide varieties of database namely - Springer, EBSCO Host, ProQuest, Thieme, Elsevier, PubMed, Medline, Sage, Crossref, Oxford University, De Gruyter, Peter Lang, UCSanDiego. Turnitin detects similarities. It uses several colors in order to represent similarity percentages. Those colors are Blue (no matching words), Green (1 - 24% similarity index), Yellow (25 - 49%), Orange (50 - 74%) and Red (75 - 100% similarity index).
- **Urkund:** Ministry of Human Resources Development, along with UGC and Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET) has chosen Urkund software for Indian universities to prevent Plagiarism. This software is very popular nowadays and the faculty members, research scholars and students of PG and UG levels of more than thousand Indian Universities are using it.
- **iThenticate:** It is a plagiarism detection commercial software. Both and Turnitin checks the same databases. However iThenticate has been designed for researchers whereas Turnitin has be constructed for faculties, instructors and for educators.

6. ACADEMIC OFFENCES

In order to get good marks or grade, many students are involved themselves in Academic offence. By Academic offences we mean illegal copying of someone else’s work, reusing or resubmitting one’s own work, daring effort to present falsifying records, cheating on online exams etc. In order to restrict students from Academic offences, many universities round the globe have imposed Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. It is true that enormous pressure is there on researchers to publish otherwise they shall be perished. However quality of research should not be compromised at the same time they should work extremely hard to come out of this critical situation.

7. UGC GUIDELINES

University Grants Commission in its 530th meeting made provision for prevention of plagiarism in the higher education. There are specific penalties assigned by UGC for different levels of plagiarism, which have been shown in the following table (no. 2).

Table 2: Penalties for different levels of plagiarisms

S no.	Level	Penalty for candidate
1	Zero	No penalty to be imposed
2	Low	Work is be resubmitted with proper citations within 6 months
3	Mild	Work is be resubmitted with proper citations not before 1 year. Registration will be cancelled in case of further repetition of work.
4	High	Registration may be cancelled

However if plagiarism be reported after getting academic degree, then the awarded degree shall be put in abeyance for some period of time as recommended by University Academic Integrity Committee (UAIC). In order to suppress these illegal academic activities UGC has also set up guide lines to Higher Education Institutes (HEI).

8. HOW TO PREVENT PLAGIARISM?

Following activities are to be carried out in order to prevent plagiarism.

- Sources to be cited very carefully. Specific guidelines are there for citing original sources, which are called citation styles. There are three major citation styles and those are- Modern Language Association (MLA), American Psychological Association (APA) and Chicago Styles for (a) Notes and bibliography (b) Author-Date.
- Paraphrasing is to be conducted with great caution
- Quotation mark is to be used for complete copying
- Plagiarism checker tools are to be used
- Insertion of foot notes as and when required

9. POOR ACADEMIC OUTPUT

Several reasons may be there for poor academic output of an academic institute. The root causes may be explained using Fishbone Diagram or Ishikawa Diagram. The basic lay out of such a diagram is as follows.

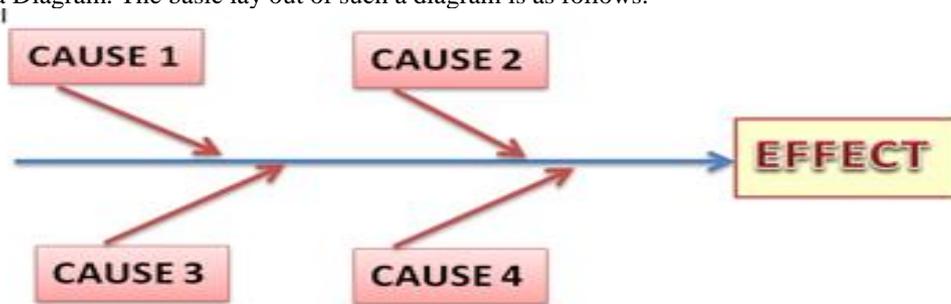


Fig. 1: Basic Ishikawa Diagram

Ishikawa diagram was given by Prof. Kaoru Ishikawa. He was one of the quality Gurus.

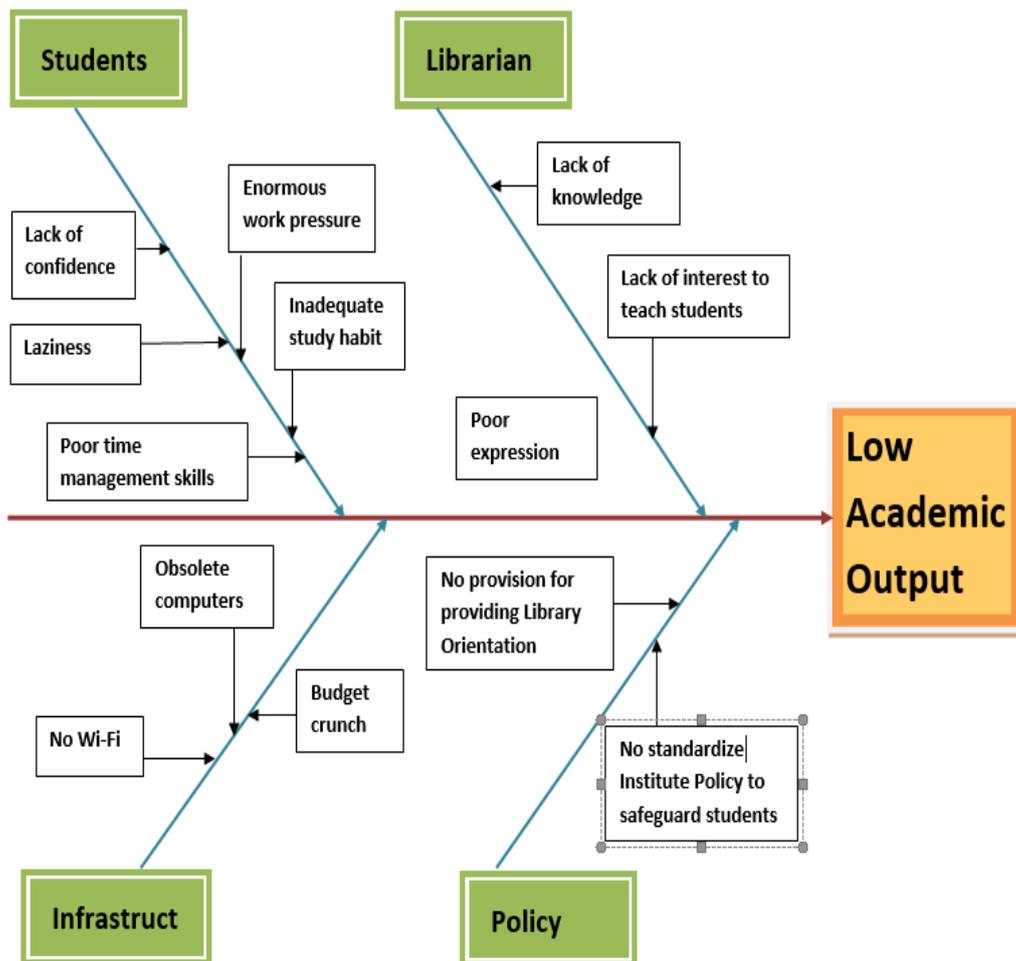


Fig. 2: Ishikawa diagram explaining root causes for low academic output

Low academic output may be explained with the help of Ishikawa Diagram. Root causes have been shown in the above diagram. From the point of view of students: Lack of confidence, enormous work pressure, inadequate study habit, poor time management skills, and laziness – all these things forces the students to commit academic offence.

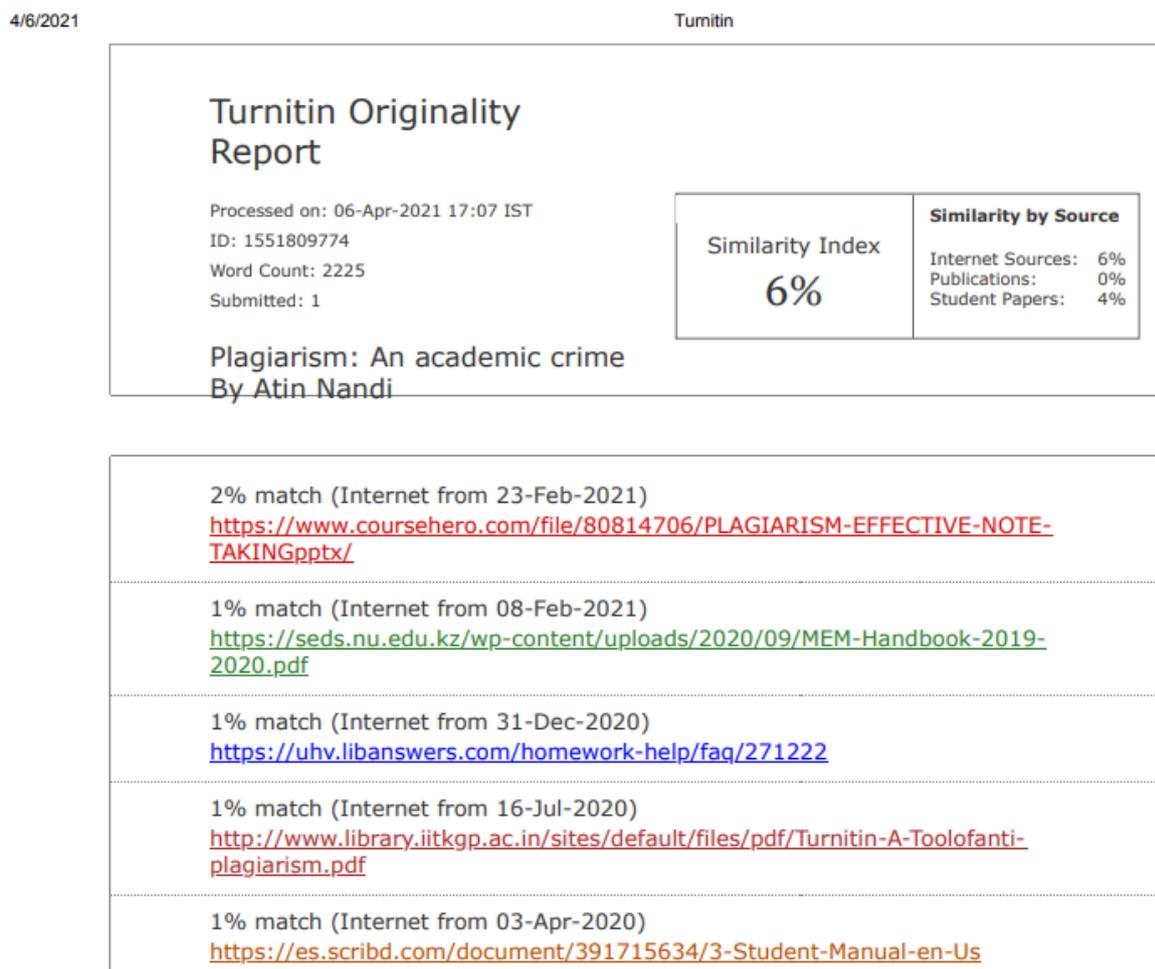
From the point of view of Library staff: Many librarians do not update their knowledge. Naturally they do not find any interest to conduct Library Orientation Program to the students. Consequently hidden treasures of the library will not be exposed to the library patrons. Hence the library services and the resources will be underutilized.

From the point of view of library infrastructure: In order to render good service a library need good budget. A library should have good number of computers with Internet connectivity in order to allure the young learners. Users can utilize their laptops or mobile phones utilizing Wi-Fi connection. Otherwise the users will be deprived to extract the useful library resources

From the point of view of different policies: A library should conduct Library Orientation Program to educate their members. Moreover every academic institute should have standardized policy to prevent the students to commit academic crimes.

10. TURNITIN REPORT OF THE PAPER

The Central Library, IIT Kharagpur is using Turnitin software. Undergoing complete check through this software 6% similarity was found as shown in the Pic.1.



Pic. 1: Turnitin originality report of the paper

11. STANDARDIZED POLICIES TO SAFEGUARD STUDENTS

With an increase in the number of online submissions, plagiarism has become a major concern in the academic community. In order to combat, institutions have now powered themselves with specialized plagiarism detecting tools that helps to detect copied work. Starting from periodic assignments to home examinations, all textual contents are run for comparison with existing sources from the Internet as well as previous submissions. The reuse of published or even one’s own previously submitted work by changing few sentences is strictly prohibited. In addition, similarities traced without proper reference or quotations are considered to be a serious offense.

Indication of plagiarism leads to disciplinary actions by the course teacher, director of studies, and disciplinary board members against the offender. Concrete evidence implying cheating results in warning or suspension for over a span of two weeks to six months. In most instances, the wrongdoer is failed after discussing with the committee and is allowed to reappear for the examination in the next semester. To mitigate such issues, universities have now established a set of standardized policies to safeguard students from committing plagiarism. Before starting the course, freshers are familiarized with the importance of originality and how the fraud-detecting system works. A form is signed to ensure compulsory participation and agreement of not cheating over the entire

duration of study. Besides these, a set of objectives are established to avoid the need of plagiarism. These include a demonstration of understanding course work, presentation of skills and abilities, and analysis via critical thinking ability.

12. CONCLUSION

With the passage of time digital resources are proliferating steadily. People are doing academic offences intentionally or unintentionally. Students should be trained adequately so as to diminish their affinity towards plagiarism. Authors or students should maintain best moral standards relating to plagiarism. Plagiarism should be well defined within the code of conduct of an academic institution. Plagiarism is an ethical issue. Librarians should come forward in developing knowledge for academic digital literacy. Library Orientation Program is to be conducted in a very interesting manner. Attending such program students will understand easily how to extract the resources and services, how to avoid plagiarism, how to submit assignments. Thus they will achieve good academic result. Universities should formulate standardized policies to safeguard their students from being trapped within the black magic of plagiarism. Root causes for poor academic performances must have to be analyzed employing the technique of Ishikawa Diagram. After all one's fame may be ruined forever due to plagiarized research or adopting this unethical issue.

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