



Plagiarism in Scientific Writing:Whom to Blame?

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Honesty and integrity are the virtues of the good researchers. Yet , questions of Plagiarism, Fabrication and Falsification sporadically emerge from such a highly scholarly people. Pressure of academic promotion ,and acquring research funds are two main reasons that researchers risk their own morality while publishing their literary works.¹

The World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) defines plagiarism as “the use of others’ published and unpublished ideas or words (or other intellectual property) without attribution or permission, and presenting them as new and original rather than derived from an existing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”.²Plagiarim is considered as serious scientific misconduct, but the burning question is “whom to blame?” Solution is not simply incorporating the plagiarism checking software.

There are ethical codes of Good Scientific Practice (GSP), however, most academic institutions lack monitoring mechanism of on-going research and assessing the quality and trustfulness of research reporting. So lack of institutional policies and responsibilities are often the main reasons fostering the culture of plagiarism knowingly or unknowingly. Interestingly, many of us are unaware of plagiarism in our own papers until we check it with plagiarism checking softwares. According to WAME, when six consecutive words are copied or

7 to 11 words are overlapping set of 30 letters ,constitutes plagiarism in strict sense.³

Thus dealing with manuscript’s plagiarism check is a subject of individual opinion.Some forms of plagiarism always exist when we directly quote or paraphrase in mosaic form because these are the similarities of words. What percentage is considered as a major plagiarism to bring into notification?These are just rule of thumb however , researchers should be aware of the guidelines set by the Committee on Publication Ethics(COPE). The flowcharts introduced by COPE is handy dealing with issues of scientific misconduct , however when there are so many researches on the similare topics, should we label it as plagiarism? Can zero tolerance in plagiarism achievable ? Should researchers check plagiarism before submission of the article or is it responsibility of editors?

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