

Experiences of experts about the instances of plagiarism

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Plagiarism is defined as intentional deceiving or lack of honesty, which deprives others from both material and spiritual possessions. Ethics is considered as one of the most important aspects of evaluating the quality of higher education. Moreover, scientific ethics should be reflected from university values, as a specialized institution, rather than being a reflection of the others cares. Therefore, the main aim of the present study is explore of expert experiences about plagiarism in Isfahan University of Medical Sciences. **Materials and Methods:** This study employed qualitative method with using in-deep interview. The research participants consisted of 21, who tend to this work. Semi structure interview were conducted and recorded. The method of analyzing data was 'thematic analysis'. The data were transcribed and saved on computer after each interview. Themes and sub-themes were extracted. Finally, relevant sub-themes were arranged in a category and suggested were presented. **Result:** Analyzing data showed 600 primary codes, 40 sub-themes and 6 themes. The main themes included repeated works, non-normative adoption, non-normative adaptation, shares distribution, forging, and profit-seeking, each of which consisted of one or several subgroups. **Conclusion:** The findings of this study show that since, there are numerous ways of cheating, the universities' research committees must create institutions in order to educate the individuals how to avoid plagiarism. In addition, providing information about different types of scientific violations, as well as their following punishments might lead to the decrease of such misbehaviors.

Key words: Experiences, Isfahan of medical science university, plagiarism

INTRODUCTION

Plagiarism is, in fact, the counterpoint of the university. It deceives the reader and, at the same time, hurts the author both

materially and spiritually. Nevertheless, the spiritual aspect is believed to be more influential in destroying the scientific community. Plagiarism stops the science from improving, causes scientific stagnation, and finally, instead of producing science, leads to the creation of the vicious circle of science.

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Plagiarism is defined as intentional deceiving or lack of honesty, which deprives others from both material and spiritual possessions.^[1] In addition, it means taking other people's work as one's own without asking for their permission.^[2]

Propagation of plagiarism and superficial views toward this important issue, both, lead to damaging the values of the scientific communities and their certificates, as well as possessions. Moreover, since distrust destroys the motivation for performing scientific researches, real producers of science, such as scientists and authors, will either produce no scientific works or move away from such communities.

| Access this article online | |
|---|--|
| Quick Response Code:  | Website: www.jehp.net |
| | DOI: 10.4103/2277-9531.115817 |

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This article may be cited as: Keyvanara M, Ojaghi R, Sohrabi MC, Papi A. Experiences of experts about the instances of plagiarism. J Edu Health Promot 2013;2:32.

In general, there exists much information regarding the incidences of cheating; however, there is limited amount of information about the prevalence of its various forms. Therefore, scientific activists, as well as the consumers of scientific productions should be well educated regarding plagiarism.^[3]

Increasing of educational centers, high rate of scientific production and publication of it, as well as simple access to the results of researches due to the development of Information Technology can all lead to damaging the science. Therefore, a solution must be provided in order to prevent such violations. The ideal university must reflect the premier moral values in both scientific environments and academic activities; i.e., the university should reflect such values in its goals, views, and programs.^[4]

Several works have been conducted on material, as well as intellectual property rights, cheating, and plagiarism, both inside and outside Iran.^[3,5-7] However, there are a limited number of researches investigating experiences of expert about plagiarism.

Some experts believe plagiarism is endemic in most countries.^[5] While performing their activities, researchers, authors, publishers, and translators might, whether consciously or unconsciously, commit plagiarism. In general, according to some scholars plagiarism has been classified into different categories: intentional vs. unintentional,^[8] direct vs. indirect,^[9] and weak, average, and intense.^[5] However, there are limited types of plagiarism in Iran. Moreover, it has been claimed that plagiarism exists in a lot of these, as well as results.^[5]

When the higher education's demand increases for scientific production and globalization, sensitivity to its validation and quality assurance increases, as well.^[10] Ethics is considered as one of the most important aspects of evaluating the quality of higher education.^[11] Moreover, scientific ethics should be reflected from university values, as a specialized institution, rather than being a reflection of the others cares.^[12] In addition, specialists, particularly in medical sciences, can understand ethics only by understanding their professional activities, the philosophy behind them, and their relationship with people's life.^[13]

Plagiarism provides a context for other scientific misbehaviors in future occupation of the medical students;^[14] since, they have great interaction with people, so this issue is very important. However, the main aim of the present study is explore of expert experiences about plagiarism in Isfahan University of Medical Sciences. The findings of the present study could lead the researchers toward a more scientific literature and a closer level to the global standards.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed qualitative method with using in-deep interview. Participants were chosen from Isfahan University

of Medical Sciences, in 2011 and included academic staff who faced plagiarism, ethic committee members, thesis and articles referees, academic promotion committee, and university journal editors. The study uses a purposeful sampling technique to recruit participants, and recruiting continued until data saturation was achieved (Lois, 2003). The research participants consisted of 21, who tend to this work. Semi structure interview were conducted and recorded. Interview duration was varied between 30 to 60 min. Validity of interviewer was gained by supervisor guides in some pilots' interviews. The method of analyzing data was 'thematic analysis'. The data were transcribed and saved on computer after each interview. Also marginal remarks like; silence, expressions etc., were entered in this stage. Data were read several times for immersion and then they were divided to semantic units in main paragraphs and sentences. Semantic units were reviewed several times again. Themes and sub-themes were extracted. Finally, relevant sub-themes were arranged in a category and suggested were presented.^[15]

The autonomous of participants were considered. This research also adopted the conditions of the University ethic committee and now it is approved.

RESULTS

In this research, participants are Isfahan university faculty members, which consist of the 3 ethic committee members, 3 academic promotion committee members, 2 research committee members, 5 thesis and articles referees, 4 university journal editors, 1 director, 2 research chancellor and 1 publisher.

Analyzing data showed 600 primary codes, 40 sub-themes and 6 themes. The main themes included repeated works, non-normative adoption, non-normative adaptation, shares distribution, forging, and profit-seeking, each of which consisted of one or several subgroups [Table 1].

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to investigate the instances of plagiarism by using experiences of the experts in Isfahan University of Medical Sciences. Considering the first objective of the study; i.e., identifying experiences of experts about plagiarism, the results can be classified into 6 main themes: repeated works, non-normative adoption, non-normative adaptation, distributing shares, forging, and profit-seeking and their sub-themes. The results appear in Table 2.

In previous studies, Nakhaee, *et al.*^[6] found and categorized 48 cases of research misconduct. This study found 11 identical cases also. Result of Wood MJ.^[16] study about doing repeated works, are consistent with this study. Result of Zaker salehi G.^[3] study about creating certificates is consistent with our study. One of plagiarism is coping internet pictures and images without citation. Roberts TS.^[17] claims that

Table 1: Subject and sub-subject about plagiarism with use of experiment's expert

| Code | Statement | Sub-subject | Subject |
|------|---|---|-------------------------|
| 1 | An article received for our journal., we sent it for referees. One of them said this text is mine! He has taken my thesis and has changed it to an article with another title | Changing the title of the research | |
| 6 | One uses another's idea and changes its population. Or if he has done for nursing, one will do for Headquarters staff | Changing the population under study | Repeated works |
| 12 | One of the friends submits one abstract to four conferences! And it was accepted by all of them | Presenting a research in several congresses | |
| 15 | Some of people print the translation of works that has been translated already, with little changes | Several translations with few changes | |
| 2 | We sent paper for referee. He said I refereed it last week for another journal! | Publishing one article in two journals | |
| 1 | A paragraph extract and citation it too, but they do not know must write it in quotations! | Not identifying the statement, with cite | |
| 11 | Most times, he does not citation in his research, when uses another paper. | Not identifying the sources | |
| 3 | It is happen for me: I proposed a subject to student for research, it was my property, after a while, another colleague did it and records his name | Presenting the others' ideas and thoughts as one's own | Nonnormative adoption |
| 6 | Some students had taken assignments from higher courses and had changed their names ... but I knew it and said: "is this assignment of miss...?" | Copying class assignments | |
| 6 | You produce an educational CD, hard. Then, first problem is that student coping and hacking it easily | Copying the educational CDs | |
| 3 | Some one had downloaded pictures from Internet instead of your self's laboratory pictures in his paper | Copying the pictures and images | |
| 21 | While they want to write in English., worry about grammar; it is ok or not? There for copying the other article's format and just change some words | Using the other articles' format or structure. | |
| 14 | They translate some foreign books and patch them and present it as their written | Translating books and articles | |
| 20 | The teacher has given assignment to student. After their graduate has written book and paper by them without mention their names, against of ethics research base | Giving assignments to the students and using them as one's own works | Nonnormative adaptation |
| 15 | We had presented work shop in... university. They had downloaded our power points on their web site without citation | Using the other people's power points, questions, and pamphlets | |
| 10 | A PhD thesis had been sent for referee few days ago. I saw references... I knew that person is weak in... language and he/she can not understand this hard book. I called him/her and asked that how many volumes was that book? He/she did not know! | Neglecting the cited source | |
| 13 | I wrote an article and asked the other completed it with his/her data as second or third writer. But he/she betrayed and wrote as first writer. | Not observing the priority of the authors' names based on their rights | |
| 11 | A teacher encouraged me for an article. He/she said I would edit and print in journal. After much time, some money was sent for me but my name were not written in article. | Deleting the names | |
| 3 | Some times, some researchers write the names of relatives like brother, wife, husband and etc. as regards, their scientific fields are different in university | Mentioning other people's names because of family or friendly relationships | Distributing shares |
| 21 | here, most problems are authorship. For example the teacher has a little guided, but the student has written her/his name as main writer | Mentioning other people's names for appreciation | |
| 21 | In Institute or Hospital or... for employment, he/she had to select some one and weal and deal... and ads his/her name in paper | Mentioning the names of the superiors | |
| 17 | It is happen for me; student has added my name in his/her paper and has sent to journal. Well. Editor would sure with seeing my name and accept it. But after accept, the student remove my name | Mentioning some people's names for improving the work's validity | |
| 4 | A post graduated student has claimed lab discovery! The news shows it. While all of us know, he/she is lying | Unreal claims | Forging |
| 17 | The researcher has worked hardly for a long time. And analysis data have no desired result, now. There for he/she retouches them to obtain desired result | Forging unreal results | |
| 13 | As while as the plan was adopted, they want to finish it! They make synthesized data. For example, present 100 samples, but have had 50 samples, then have multiplied by 2 the results | Presenting an unreal study population | |
| | 3 types: | Forging in conferences, seminars, and congresses: | |

Contd...

Table 1: Contd...

| Code | Statement | Sub-subject | Subject |
|------|---|--|----------------|
| 21 | In conferences and seminars we are dealing with abstracts therefore, we cannot judge good... Some times we receive abstracts different from original article | Lack of conformity between the abstract and the article | |
| 8 | An exaggerated abstract is written, and reach to aims are just claimed, but no do it... no present | Presenting an abstract for which no article has been written | |
| 6 | Some one wrote his/her abstract in English by hard and specialty words. While some referees had seen it, had accepted it. Because of it had been in English, therefore it must be excellent | Sending an abstract in English | |
| 17 | Some one has taken an article about special disease. Then, has inserted his/her data, and has claimed I have done it. We investigated and understand any research there about this disease | Creating the data of the study | |
| 5 | An article had been written in Mexico and had been tested for 42 patients. Result had shown 19% blood pressure... an article that had been sent for our journal, just had been changed Isfahan instead of Mexico! | Forging a whole article or book | |
| 19 | A thesis was delivery. It was coping of foreign articles exactly and researcher nothing had done... his/her graduated postponed until do it | Forging in thesis | |
| 13 | [Some times if nobody write article for them, propose partnership to someone. they say I pay money, u write | Doing research projects for money | |
| 6 | I permanently receive messages and advertize; give us your proposal or subjects. We will write and print in ISI journal for you. For how money! | Getting admission to reliable journals | Profit-seeking |
| 4 | Certifications are buying and selling! Some fake degree... that call their self doctors or engineer... nothing! | Creating certificates | |

Table 2: Kinds of plagiarism in different forms and ways

| Themes (forms) | Sub-themes (ways) |
|--------------------------|--|
| Repeated works | Changing the title of the research. Changing the population under study. Presenting a research in several congresses, conferences, and seminar. Creating several translations of a foreign work with a few changes. Publishing one article in two journals |
| Non-normative adoption | Not identifying the statement, with cite. Not identifying the sources. Presenting the others' ideas and thoughts as one's own. Copying class assignments. Copying the educational CDs. Copying the pictures and images |
| Non-normative adaptation | Using the other articles' format or structure. Translating books and articles. Giving assignments to the students and using them as one's own works. Using the other people's power points, questions, and pamphlets. Neglecting the cited source |
| Distributing shares | Not observing the priority of the authors' names based on their rights. Deleting the names. Mentioning other people's names because of family or friendly relationships. Mentioning other people's names for appreciation. Mentioning the names of the superiors. Mentioning some people's names for improving the work's validity |
| Forging | Unreal claims. Forging unreal results. Presenting an unreal study population. Forging in conferences, seminars, and congresses. Creating the data of the study. Forging a whole article or book. Forging in thesis |
| Profit-seeking | Doing research projects for money. Getting admission to reliable journals. Creating certificates |

downloading part or total of works, pictures and etc., in the internet without appreciate or cite, is plagiarism. Our studies prove his claim.

Khaki Sedigh A.^[7] in his study, mentions to fabrications. This study proves his claim. Also, results of Bouville M.^[18] showed; citing to references without seeing is plagiarism. Our results are as same as his result. Chun Hua S.^[19] calls students fraud in assignments as dishonesty in university. Results of this study are consistent with his study. Also, our finding prove Pimple K.^[20] claims about authorship granted or requested.

In case plagiarism occurs due to the individuals' lack of knowledge, educational groups can play an important role in preventing this misbehavior.

Overall, prevention is better than cure; therefore, the grounds for cheating and plagiarism must be identified and eradicated.

As the results of the present study depict, eradicating the working pressure (the professors' presenting articles for their promotion), lack of time, intense competition (gaining privilege for entering different educational levels in universities), money making (doing research works for money), insufficient education (in the educational system and the libraries), and lack of knowledge regarding the abomination of plagiarism in universities can lead to preventing such misbehaviors.

The findings of this study also show that since, there are numerous ways of cheating, the universities' research committees must create institutions in order to educate the individuals about how to avoid plagiarism. In addition, providing information about different types of scientific violations, as well as their following punishments might lead to the decrease of such misbehaviors. It is also quite effective in increasing the information existing in the country's legal system for upgrading the related laws and regulations.

Various studies conducted on the issue reveal cheating in different majors and even different countries to be endemic.^[5] Therefore, different universities, as well as majors must study the typology of cheating and plagiarism; so that, regarding the present conditions, necessary planning, preventing, and education can be provided by the related institutions. More studies are also needed to be conducted on identifying the reasons why people commit cheating or plagiarism. Finally, since the libraries and their information sources play a major role in producing science, the librarians must voluntarily give their users information about cheating and plagiarism.

Due to the difference in the nature of various majors, the results of the present study cannot be generalized to all universities or majors.

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Source of Support: Nil, Conflict of Interest: None declared