

# Plagiarism: Problem, Behaviour and Reduction

Pritee<sup>1</sup>, Deepak Grover<sup>2</sup>, Kiran Malik<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>M.Tech. Scholar, Ganga Institute of Technology & Management, Kablana (Jhajjar)  
*Priti.hooda@gmail.com*

<sup>2</sup>M.Tech. Scholar, Department of computer Science & Applications, MDU, Rohtak  
*Deepakgrover1986@gmail.com*

<sup>3</sup>Assistant Professor, Matu Ram Institute of Engineering & Management, Rohtak  
*kiransaggi2001@gmail.com*

## Abstract

Plagiarism has been troubling academic world since long. With the invention of electronic resources like internet in recent times, it has become easier and more accessible for students than ever before. Practice of plagiarism by students has resulted negative consequences in the academic field, and university teachers are now facing problems that are more challenging. This has led to the production and submission of assignments and research works that are not properly referenced and cited or, worse still, are those that are being submitted which are partly or completely written by someone else. This paper examines the issue of plagiarism by nursing students and academics in Indian universities and highlights how electronic developments such as the internet and word processing have made it easier. It describes the plagiarism & its types. Moreover, we have proposed a model to analyze plagiarism behavior and we also discussed some techniques, through which, one can reduce plagiarism.

**Keywords:** *Plagiarize, Markov Chain, Slabbing Plagiarism, and Plagiarism Reduction.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Plagiarism has been defined as "the taking and using as one's own of the thoughts, writings or inventions of another". There are many varieties and degrees of plagiarism. We will deal here with plagiarism of written work in academia and science, although the problem is not limited to these areas. Many people think of plagiarism as copying another's work, or borrowing someone else's original ideas. But terms like "copying" and "borrowing" can disguise the seriousness of the offense:

According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, to "plagiarize" means

- to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own

- to use (another's production) without crediting the source
- to commit literary theft
- to present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source.

In other words, plagiarism is an act of fraud. It involves both stealing someone else's work and lying about it afterward.

But can words and ideas really be stolen?

According to U.S. law, the answer is yes. The expression of original ideas is considered intellectual property, and is protected by copyright laws, just like original inventions. Almost all forms of expression fall under copyright protection as long as they are recorded in some way (such as a book or a computer file).

All of the following are considered plagiarism:

- turning in someone else's work as your own
- copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit
- failing to put a quotation in quotation marks
- giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation
- changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit
- copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of your work, whether you give credit or not (see our section on "fair use" rules)

Most cases of plagiarism can be avoided, however, by citing sources. Simply acknowledging that certain material has been borrowed, and providing your

audience with the information necessary to find that source, is usually enough to prevent plagiarism.

## II. TYPES OF PLAGIARISM

The verb “plagiarize” is defined in the *Shorter Oxford* as follows:

Take and use as one’s own (the thoughts, writings, inventions, etc., of another person);  
 Copy (literary work, ideas, etc.) improperly or without acknowledgement; pass off the thoughts, work, etc. of (another person) as one’s own  
 Plagiarism thus involves claiming credit for ideas or creations without proper acknowledgement.

In an academic context, acknowledgement is typically given in the form of citations or explicit statements of thanks. This is important for several reasons, including to give credit for ideas or words, to provide support for one’s argument, and to show that one is aware of sources. To speak of proper acknowledgement is to focus on the positive side of scholarly practice; to speak of plagiarism is to focus on the negative. There are many types of plagiarism and it is worthwhile outlining several of them.

### Plagiarism of ideas

Claiming credit for someone else’s thoughts, ideas or inventions can be called “plagiarism of ideas.” This occurs, for example, when a corporation adopts the idea of an independent inventor, claiming it as its own. Proving plagiarism of ideas can be difficult, because of the possibility of independent creation. Alfred Russell Wallace is credited with the independent discovery of the theory of evolution; if he had known about Darwin’s work prior to his own, he might be accused of plagiarism. Today, anyone claiming credit for the theory of evolution is assumed to be a plagiarist because the theory is so widely known.

A student reviewing a book might develop ideas on her own but would be guilty of plagiarism of ideas if she was inspired by a book review (published or unpublished) but didn’t mention this review in her own. Another possibility is that she was talking with friends about the book and picked up an insight from one of them, and then used it in her review as if the idea was her own.

### Word-for-word plagiarism

Copying the exact expression of someone’s writing can be called “word-for-word plagiarism.” Consider

the following sentence written by Jeff Schmidt: “Indeed, the most difficult part about becoming a professional is adopting the professional attitude and learning to be comfortable adhering to the given ideological framework, which some students find quite alien.” If this sentence is reproduced in an essay without quotation marks, this is word-for-word plagiarism, even if Schmidt is mentioned. Next consider this version: “The most challenging part about becoming a professional is adopting the attitude of a professional and learning to be comfortable in the given ideological framework, a process some students find alien.” Some words have been changed but the basic structure of Schmidt’s sentence remains.

This could be considered word-for-word plagiarism or possibly very poor paraphrasing. Unless Schmidt is cited, it also involves plagiarism of ideas. Finally consider this: “It is very difficult for some students to adopt the attitudes and ideological framework required for them to succeed as professionals.” This is an acceptable paraphrase of Schmidt’s statement, but Schmidt should be cited, otherwise it is plagiarism of ideas.

### Plagiarism of sources

If writer R uses writer S’s citations, without acknowledging that the citations came from S, this can be called “plagiarism of sources.” For example, in the chapter from which the above sentence was drawn, Schmidt cites several articles from the *New York Times*, Max Horkheimer’s *Eclipse of Reason* and Robert N. Proctor’s *Value-Free Science?* If A made an argument similar to Schmidt’s, citing Schmidt, and used the same set of references — perhaps adding a few or omitting some — without noting that Schmidt had used the same ones for the same purposes, this would be plagiarism of sources. The more serious plagiarism is when the sources are not read by R: the references are simply taken from S’s bibliography.

A less serious form occurs when R reads the sources but does not reveal indebtedness to S for having discovered that particular relevant collection or sequence of references. There is another form of misattribution not covered by the concept of plagiarism: citing sources that were not actually used to make the argument in question. For example, an academic might cite prominent figures in the field as a form of obeisance, without actually using their ideas in the argument.

### Plagiarism of authorship

If R claims to be the author of an entire piece of work — an article, an essay, a book, a musical composition — fully or substantially authored by S, this can be called “plagiarism of authorship.” This occurs when a scientist submits a paper that has already been published by someone else, when a student submits an essay written by someone else (such as a friend or someone who has been paid to write it), when an academic is listed as author of work largely produced by a spouse, research assistant or student, or when a subordinate, speechwriter or ghostwriter does the bulk of intellectual work for a work produced under the name of a celebrity, politician, corporate executive or someone else with money, position or status.

Plagiarism of authorship often involves word-for-word plagiarism, but not always.

Translating an article from another language and publishing it under one’s name, as if one had written it, is plagiarism of authorship but not word-for-word plagiarism.

It is worth noting that plagiarism does not necessarily involve copyright infringement. A ghostwriter might write a book for a celebrity who appears as the sole author; the celebrity or the book publisher would normally hold the copyright.<sup>7</sup>

In most cases, software for detecting plagiarism can detect only word-for-word plagiarism for those documents in its database. Such software cannot detect plagiarism of ideas, plagiarism of sources or plagiarism of authorship unless they also involve detectable word-for-word plagiarism. Students who take ideas from others but express them in their own words will not be detected. Nor will students who purchase custom-written essays.<sup>8</sup> Nor will those who copy from sources not on detection databases, such as many printed texts, CD-ROMs, certain subscription databases and the deep web, or who use translations of documents.<sup>9</sup>

### Miscellaneous Types of plagiarism

The meaning of ‘plagiarism’ is very broad. It can range from large scale theft of previously published material to submission of the same (including original) material by two or more individuals. ‘Self-plagiarism’ occurs when an author produces multiple versions of the same material. We suggest it may be helpful to define four broad categories of the theft or use of the work of others, and have listed these below in order of what we consider to be decreasing severity.

*Slabbing plagiarism* is the cutting and pasting of entire paragraphs and even whole sections (e.g. an introduction to a published research paper) of material written by another person into a piece of work without acknowledgement, and with little or no change.

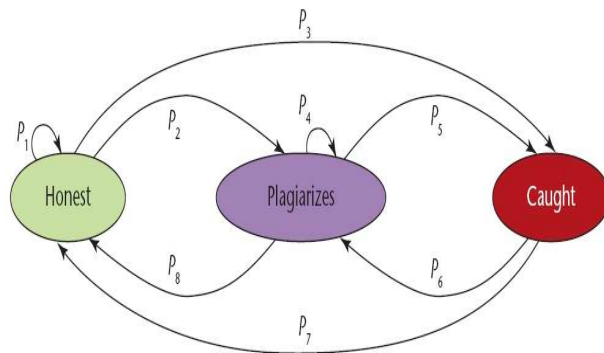
*Skipping plagiarism* is taking every second or third sentence from one or more textual sources and assembling the sentences in order, thereby constructing what may superficially appear to be a coherent document. We have found this type of plagiarism by students (including postgraduates) who were having difficulty understanding complex concepts.

*Sharing plagiarism* is when two or more students submit the same or very similar material, which may be their original work. If, however, the shared material has been slabbed or skipped from elsewhere, the severity of the plagiarism is obviously much greater.

*Snipping plagiarism* is taking a sentence here and there from one or more sources and incorporating these into a piece of work. This may sometimes be inadvertent in that it is very easy for a person’s writing style to be colored by what they have recently read. Nevertheless, we suspect what appears to be snipping may often be the end result of slabbing followed by rewriting, since several students have told us their writing technique is to slab paragraphs of previously published material into a document and then ‘do a major rewrite on them’. Essentially this process, which has been called ‘patch writing’ by Howard (1993), may produce work that appears to be the rewriter’s own words about existing ideas, but it is perhaps not surprising that some sentences and snippets survive.

### III. PROPOSED MODEL FOR PLAGIARISM BEHAVIOUR

To approach curbing plagiarism, we propose the model in Figure 1, which shows a Markov chain with three states: *honesty*, *plagiarism*, and *caught*. Students move between states with probabilities. For simplicity, let’s assume that all students start in the honesty state:



**Figure 1 Markov chain model of plagiarism behavior**

- They can remain in that state with  $P_1$  or move to the plagiarism state with  $P_2$ ; they could also move to the caught state with  $P_3$ , which reflects the false-positive problem.
- Students can stay in the plagiarizing state with  $P_4$  or return to being honest with  $P_8$ .
- From the plagiarizing state, students can move to the caught state with  $P_5$ .
- From the caught state, students can move to the plagiarizing state with  $P_6$  or to the honesty state with  $P_7$ .

The following matrix represents these state transitions with hypothetical probabilities:

	H	P	C
H	0.69	0.30	0.01
P	0.01	0.79	0.20
C	0.50	0.50	0.00

It's tempting to add absorbing states of *graduated* and *left without graduating* to the chain, but that would obscure the larger reality, which is that plagiarism regularly occurs in nonacademic settings, as well. This is a particularly problematic issue in professions such as journalism and information security, which are charged with the protection or safe treatment of intellectual capital. We thus need to consider the behavior in the context of all situations, rather than simply academic settings. In fact, we find it necessary and important to tell students on the first

night of class that academia includes no such thing as “boilerplate” or “standard” language because plagiarism is apparently so rampant in industry today that many students consider it not only normal but necessary.

To understand what could affect these probabilities, we should examine the influences on the students. If they look around and see classmates plagiarizing without getting caught, they might be influenced to plagiarize, too. Alternatively, Seeing classmates plagiarizing and getting caught might influence students to stay honest. Honest students wrongly accused of plagiarism could be influenced to think they might as well plagiarize, or they might become even more diligent in staying honest. Other people's attitudes might have the strongest effect on future behavior.

Anecdotally, what seems to work in my environment is a combination of elements: discussion of plagiarism, exemplars, strong enforcement, and continual reminders. In *Discussing plagiarism*, we include definitions and examples of historical cases. This process can take quite some time, but it ensures that students understand what plagiarism is and how it relates to intellectual property rights. Using exemplars has turned out to be extremely important.

By talking about current student cases (without specific identifying information), we demonstrate the seriousness and reality of the situation to the students. In discussing the cases, step-by-step explanations of how the university handles academic integrity violations seem to really grab students' attention. Showing them the form used, describing the hearing process, and talking about case outcomes increases their level of awareness that the subject isn't just talk. Even with all these efforts, we get the occasional violator who invariably tries to talk his or her way out of a charge. Because we refer each and every case to the Academic Integrity Council, we have developed a well-known reputation among students.

#### IV PLAGIARISM REDUCTION

Plagiarism is a global problem, but it must be dealt with at both national and university level in the INDIA. In response to the problem, the National Plagiarism Advisory Service has been established by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) and is provided by NIC (National Informatics Center ). It provides generic advice for institutions and staff and advices students on writing essays and plagiarism.

There is also a directory of information on the subject, including websites, conferences, press articles and workshops to highlight issues and provide a forum to share good practice.

In addition, the NIC has procured a national detection service, which will be fully supported in the first two years, and available to the higher and further education community. The plagiarism detection service may be used to detect the use of websites and collusion between students, but it cannot pick up straightforward copying from books or the use of online subscription material.

Following steps can be useful for reducing Plagiarism:

- i. Academics should set a good example by giving appropriate credit for sources used in preparing their lectures and notes.
- ii. Academics should stop claiming credit for the work of others.
- iii. Accentuate the positive and show students how proper citation strengthens their writing and shows they have researched the topic.
- iv. Make it clear to students that simply downloading a paper will not help them to develop their ability to analyze or synthesize information, to judge the credibility of sources, or to express them clearly and convincingly.
- v. Timetable compulsory sessions on academic writing and citation skills, including the correct citation of electronic sources and teach, by means of discussion and practice, and suggest ways to avoid plagiarism.
- vi. Teach students how to recognize acceptable and unacceptable paraphrases.
- vii. Include specific instructions regarding correct in-text and end-of-text referencing and bibliographies. Ensure teaching staff give consistent guidance. To put it simply, references should be correct, complete, consistent and convincing.
- viii. When assessing student work, lecturers should give students feedback on any errors in referencing technique.

- ix. Explain what should be avoided and what is encouraged in terms of collusion and collaboration.
- x. Ensure that students know you are aware of essay banks and cheat sites and that you monitor them.
- xi. Policies should be written clearly and include illustrations and examples.
- xii. Treat all plagiarism as unacceptable, even if it is claimed that it was unintended, and deal with it formally with penalties to fit the circumstances.
- xiii. Rewrite or modify the assignment each time the module is taught.
- xiv. Decrease the learning outcomes that ask for knowledge and understanding, substituting instead those that require analysis, evaluation and synthesis; consider adding information gathering to learning outcomes.

## V CONCLUSION

The results of this small pilot study indicate that plagiarism is prevalent amongst students. From the students' responses in the questionnaires, the main reasons for acknowledged plagiarism were external pressures to succeed or time pressure. Even if the teachers identify the cases of plagiarism, they are helpless because there is no policy in the universities in India. There should be a strict policy applicable to all the students in the university. Plagiarism is a serious offence against scholarship and should be condemned and penalized. Once plagiarism has been detected, it is important that it is dealt with fairly, consistently and in accordance with the principles of natural justice .

Students must be aware that even if they lift up a single sentence without acknowledging the source, this is plagiarism. Intentional plagiarism is more disastrous than accidental one.

It is also worthwhile remembering that plagiarism takes many forms, and as Piety (2002 p1) theorizes, "plagiarism is subjective....what is plagiarism to one person is not necessarily plagiarism to another".

## **VI REFERENCES**

- [1] Alexander J (1988) Lectures: the ethics of borrowing. College Teaching 36, 1, 21-24
- [2] Babbie E (1998) Plagiarism. Social Sciences Research and Instructional Council: [www.csubak.edu/ssric/Modules/Other/plagiarism.htm](http://www.csubak.edu/ssric/Modules/Other/plagiarism.htm) (Last accessed: August 9 2004.)
- [3] Carroll J, Appleton J (2001) Plagiarism: A Good Practice Guide. Oxford, Oxford Brookes University and Joint Information Systems Committee
- [4] Clare J (1996) University cheats 'are debasing degrees'. Daily Telegraph, April 12. [www.telegraph.co.uk/htmlContent.jhtml;sessionId=I1NZ4EQV5WQ45QFIQMGS54AVCBQWJVC?html=/archive/1996/04/12/ncheat12.html&secureRefresh=true&\\_requestid=93463](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/htmlContent.jhtml;sessionId=I1NZ4EQV5WQ45QFIQMGS54AVCBQWJVC?html=/archive/1996/04/12/ncheat12.html&secureRefresh=true&_requestid=93463) (Last accessed: August 18 2004.)
- [5] Committee on Publication Ethics (2001) About COPE. [www.publicationethics.org.uk/cope2001/pages2001/about.phtml](http://www.publicationethics.org.uk/cope2001/pages2001/about.phtml) (Last accessed: August 18 2004.)
- [6] Culwin F, Lancaster T (2001) Plagiarism, Prevention, Deterrence and Detection London, Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, South Bank University.
- [7] Culwin F, Naylor J (1995) Pragmatic Anti-Plagiarism. Proceedings of the third All Ireland Conference on the Teaching of Computing, Dublin Dant D (1986) Plagiarism in high school: a survey English Journal. 75, 2, 81-84
- [8] Evans J (2000) the New Plagiarism in Higher Education: From Selection to Reflection. [www.warwick.ac.uk/ETS/interactions/vol4no2/evans.html](http://www.warwick.ac.uk/ETS/interactions/vol4no2/evans.html) (Last accessed: August 9 2004.)
- [9] Franklyn-Stokes A, Newstead S (1995) Undergraduate cheating: who does what and why? Studies in Higher Education 20, 2, 159-172.
- [10] Hawley C (1984) the thieves of academe: plagiarism in the university system. Improving College and University Teaching 32, 1, 35-39.
- [11] Hinchliffe L (1998) Cut-and-Paste: Preventing, Detecting and Tracking Online Plagiarism. <http://alexia.Lis.uiuc.edu/~janicke/plagiary.htm> (Last accessed: August 18 2004.)
- [12] Joint Information Systems Committee (2002) Electronic Plagiarism Detection: the Way Forward. [www.jisc.ac.uk/index.cfm?name=plagiarism\\_home](http://www.jisc.ac.uk/index.cfm?name=plagiarism_home) (Last accessed August 9 2004.)
- [13] Logue R (1996) Is nursing research detrimental to nursing education and practice? Nurse Researcher. 4, , 63-69.