RESEARCH ARTICLE

PLAGIARISM IN ACADEMIC RESEARCH: CAUSES, CONSEQUENCES, AND PREVENTIVE STRATEGIES

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Abstract

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Plagiarism has become a serious threat to academic integrity nowadays, as in the digital age, where users' easy access to online information increases the risk of copying and presenting others' intellectual work as one's own. This paper explores the meaning, historical background, types, causes, consequences, and preventive strategies of plagiarism in higher education. It gives special attention to both intentional and unintentional plagiarism as forms that constitute research misconduct. The study discusses major forms such as direct, mosaic, self-plagiarism, outsourced, and secondary source plagiarism, highlighting their ethical implications. It also examines the University Grants Commission (UGC) Regulations, 2018, which establish a structured framework and categorize penalties if misconduct is found on the basis of similarity levels. Key causes include lack of awareness, academic pressure, poor research skills, technological misuse, fear of failure, and institutional gaps. The paper concludes that promoting ethical practices and originality is essential for sustaining research credibility.

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Introduction:-

Plagiarism becomes very common in the digital era, due to easy access to online platform sources of information such as data, ideas and expressions of others' work, which comes under the Intellectual Property Rights Act, where credit is not given to that person's work or without acknowledging their original work, we come under plagiarism conduct. The University Grant Commission (UGC) introduced rules and regulations in 2018. These regulations apply to all higher-level academic institutions for students, teachers, researchers and staff in India. Researches and researchers' aim is to generate new ideas and knowledge in the development of society by introducing their new ideas instead of stealing other researchers' works under their name, just replacing a few words and structuring others' work. Using data, images, or tables submitted by another person's project or thesis without acknowledging them is unethical and unjustified to the original work. Plagiarism can be intentional or unintentional; in both cases, it will be considered unethical and unacceptable. In modern education systems, students and researchers often face academic

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performance pressure, submission deadlines, and their guides' expectations. These mind pressures and insufficient understanding of citation practices lead many researchers to commit plagiarism knowingly or unknowingly.

Therefore, understanding the nature, causes, and significance of plagiarism is essential for strong construction of an ethical research culture.

Meaning and Definition of Plagiarism Meaning:-

Plagiarism is derived from the Latin word plagiarius, meaning "kidnapper" or "abductor". In academic terms, plagiarism refers to the act of presenting another person's ideas, work, or expressions as one's own idea without proper disclosure of first-person work. It includes copying text from books, articles, or the internet sources, paraphrasing without citation, replacing few words and keeping the same structure, reusing one's own previously published work without acknowledgment.

Definitions:-

Wilson Mizner "If you steal from one author it's plagiarism if you steal from many it's research" **Fishman, T.** "Plagiarism occurs when someone uses the ideas, information, or language of another without proper acknowledgment." **Roig, M.** "Plagiarism is the appropriation of another person's ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit."

Historical Background of Plagiarism:-

The word plagiarism comes from the Latin word "plagiarius", meaning kidnapper or thief. The first recorded case of plagiarism dates back to 80 AD, when Roman poet Martial accused Fidentinus of copying his work.

Historical Development:-

*   Middle Ages: Borrowing ideas was common.
*   Renaissance: Originality gained importance.
*   1601: Ben Jonson used the term plagiary.
*   18th Century: Copyright laws emerged.
*   Modern Era: Strict academic and legal controls.

Famous Plagiarism Allegations Must Know:-

a) **Fidentinus** was accused by the Roman poet Martial in the 1st century AD, who publicly recited Martial's poems as his poem. This is the first recorded case in literary history of plagiarism.

b) **Leonardo da Vinci** was accused of borrowing ideas and designs from earlier scholars and engineers. However, many historians believe that this reflects the common practice of knowledge sharing during the Renaissance period, rather than an intentional act of plagiarism.

c) **William Shakespeare** was frequently accused of borrowing plots, themes, and characters from earlier works such as Holinshed's Chronicles and classical sources. However, scholars generally regard this borrowing as a creative adaptation, which was a common and accepted literary practice during their time.

d) **James Platt, Jr.** faced accusations of plagiarism in their academic research. Later, remarkable similarities were found between his work and previous scholars' texts, which raised notable, serious concerns about academic misconduct.

e) **Rudyard Kipling** accusations of plagiarism for his short story entitled "The Village That Voted the Earth Was Flat," as it was very close to another writer's work, and further, the matter was later resolved through legal means as plagiarism.

f) **Helen Keller.** when she was 11 years old, wrote a short story named "The Frost King," about fairies painting autumn leaves. This was similar to Margaret Canby's story entitled "The Frost Fairies", leading to accusations of plagiarism against Helen Keller, which scarred Keller and temporarily damaged her reputation. She later mentions that such similarity was caused by her unconscious mind's memory, it's just an influence, not thieving.

g) **Janet Dailey** admitted to copying passages from romance novels written by Nora Roberts. She later gave a public apology, and the incident is remarkably cited as clear plagiarism.

h) **Cristiane Serruya** a Brazilian author, was accused of plagiarizing. Several content she copying from other romance writers. Later on, investigations revealed extensive copying, making it a well-known example of plagiarism in the modern digital age. These cases show that plagiarism accusations can occur even unintentionally.

Types of Plagiarism:-

1. **Direct Plagiarism:** Direct plagiarism involves copying someone else's work word-for-word and presenting it as their own work without citation. It is the most common form and can be easily detectable by teachers and plagiarism tools.

2. **Hired Plagiarism:** Hired plagiarism occurs when a person pays someone else to write on their behalf to their thesis, paper, or assignment. Submitting such paid work tagging own name on it is unethical and a serious academic offense.

3. **Borrowed Plagiarism:** Borrowed plagiarism happens when work is taken from seniors, friends, or previous students. Using such earlier academic work without formal credit is considered plagiarism, even if permission was informal.

4. **Self-Plagiarism:** Self-plagiarism means reusing your own previously published or submitted work without proper citation. It's likes misrepresents old own work as new and violates academic and copyright rules.

5. **Mosaic (Patchwork) Plagiarism:** Mosaic plagiarism involves mixing copied phrases with original writing without proper citation. Just simply changing and replacing words or structure does not make the work original.

6. **Collaboration Plagiarism:** This type of plagiarism involves collaborating on a project work but acting like it was done alone by individual. A group of students may effort together to work on same research for the project and then each write his/her own essay based on the research, because the work is not entirely one's original and that of the student claiming it, this is plagiarism.

7. **Contributing Author Plagiarism:** Similarly, not giving credit to an author or editor who contributes to the work is considered plagiarism. Ignoring significant contributions is a form of intellectual theft.

8. **Aggregated Plagiarism:** An essay or paper doesn't have to be a word-for-word copy of other researchers' work considered plagiarism. Same rheme-based ideas and the same source usage are considered under aggregated plagiarism. Rewriting language alone does not make the content original.

9. **Outline Plagiarism:** Outline Plagiarism refers to using the same structure with new information, which is considered a form of plagiarism. Also known as "retweet plagiarism," it involves copying the outline of another person's paper in one's own research. When the thesis statement and the basic points of each paragraph remain the same, this lack of originality makes the work plagiarized.

10. **Bibliography Plagiarism:** Bibliography plagiarism means copying references or research done by someone else's work. Including unused or borrowed sources in their research is also considered unethical. Even if the written content and thesis of the paper are original, using another author's bibliography means the researcher's effort is not genuine.

11. **Secondary Source Plagiarism:** This occurs when secondary sources are used but not cited properly by the author. The author mentions only primary sources while hiding secondary ones is misleading. For example, a researcher might correctly cite an interview that the author conducted with early settlers in their community. But if the author uses information also from old newspaper articles without listing or citing them as sources of information, it becomes plagiarism.

12. **Outsourcing Plagiarism:** Outsourcing refers to hiring friends, essay mills, or writers to complete academic work. Submitting outsourced work as personal effort is academic misconduct.

13. **Accidental Plagiarism:** Accidental plagiarism happens due to poor note-taking or a lack of citation knowledge. Though unintentional, it still violates academic integrity.

14. **Self-Plagiarism (Important):** Self-plagiarism is seriously harmful to present own old work as new. It misleads readers. And such an author stops receiving research grants/funding, even if they do not acknowledge their own old work. Most publishers prohibit such work under the same subject publication in their journals due to copyright issues, but the author is not prohibited. Such Self-plagiarism practice goes to the limit and is unfair to new researchers who are trying to establish themselves in academic research.

Causes of Plagiarism:-

Plagiarism caused by several interconnected factors:

1. **Lack of Awareness:** Many students commit plagiarism because of a lack of knowledge of proper citation of sources, which they use in their research, such as the use of other authors' paraphrases, synthesizing information, or correctly citing sources of their own, involves acknowledgment of prior work, they may unintentionally commit plagiarism.

2. **Academic Pressure** Many students and researchers plagiarise because of tight paper submission deadlines, pressure to publish and the competitive environment of academia, leading them to take shortcuts rather than

encourage themselves to write original research using their own ideas and analysis of data, and other sources as supporting sources only. Competition leads researchers to copy-paste, which is unethical and goes under plagiarism.

3. Poor Research Skills: A common cause is insufficient ability or laziness towards research, use of paraphrases, integration of information, or incorrectly citing sources. Resulting in accidental or intentional plagiarism, they think those who catch or notice their copy-paste. And sometimes there are fixed mindset of a researcher that creates confusion, regret, exhaustion due to restless writing and fear of failure. And also, inadequate training in research methodology also increases plagiarism risks.

4. Technological Influence: Easy access to online resources encourages researchers to copy-paste content in their research. The vast availability of information on the internet makes it easier to copy material from multiple open sources, sometimes without proper acknowledgements. Researchers should be aware of the purpose and nature of different sources with proper citation, such as newspaper articles, specialized publications, websites, and textbooks under reference in their work. They must also evaluate and analyse the reliability, credibility, and intended audience while using these sources in their research. And a check is whether these sources provide high-quality information to readers? Is the information useful, accurate, and aligned with the basic purpose of the research?

5. Fear of failure: It is a significant factor contributing to plagiarism. Students who lack confidence while writing research work on their abilities may experience a big fear of plagiarism to avoid poor academic performance. The basic causes often include lack of knowledge, limited experience, fear, and uncertainty about results. When individuals doubt the originality or quality of their own ideas, they may borrow heavily from others to reduce perceived risk. Therefore, building confidence and academic skills is essential to prevent such misconduct.

6. Institutional Gaps: Many students come from educational backgrounds where proper citation practices, academic writing skills, and research ethics are not adequately emphasized. This absence of structured guidance, effective monitoring mechanisms, and awareness programs further aggravates the unethical academic behaviour of researchers. Thus, institutions must provide systematic training in research methodology, referencing styles, and ethical scholarship to the students. Where students should learn when to cite, how to cite, and why citation is essential in maintaining transparency, credibility, and intellectual honesty in academic research.

Consequences of Plagiarism under UGC Regulations:-
Plagiarism is considered a serious form of research misconduct under UGC (University Grants Commission) regulations. Since it falls under unethical academic practices, it attracts strict disciplinary action. The consequences include:

Rejection of Academic Work:-
If plagiarism is detected in researcher's work in their thesis, dissertation, research paper, or project report, the work may be considered as plagiarism and it will be rejected. The scholar may be asked to revise their work and resubmit it after removing plagiarized content from their research.

Academic Penalties:-
Depending on the manuscripts submitted by a range of levels (similarity index percentage), penalties may include:
a)   Deduction of marks.
b)   Cancellation of registration.
c)   Restriction on submitting a thesis for a specified period.
d)   Suspension from the academic program.

Loss of Degree or Withdrawal of Publication:-
If plagiarism is found in scholars work after the award of a degree or publication of research, then the university may:
1. Withdraw the degree.
2. Remove the published paper.
3. Cancel research recognition.

Termination of Employment:-
In cases involving faculty members or researchers, proven plagiarism can lead to:
a)   Suspension.
b)   Termination of employee service.
c)   Restriction from supervising students.

Loss of Credibility and Reputation Plagiarism damages a scholar's academic reputation and also their professional credibility. It reduces trust in scholars by the research community and may affect researchers' future funding opportunities from the community.

Institutional and Legal Action:-
If plagiarism involves intentional fraud or misuse of funds given by the community to the researcher, it may attract:

Table: Penalty in Percentage for Students Faculty/ Researchers for Academic Research Publications.

S. no.	Levels of Penalty	Penalty in Percentage	Narration
1	Level 0	Up to 10%	No penalty.
2	Level 1	10% – 40%	The manuscript must be withdrawn.
3	Level 2	40% – 60%	Manuscript withdrawn; increment denied; supervision barred (2 years).
4	Level 3	Above 60%	Manuscript withdrawn; two increments denied; supervision barred (3 years).

a)   Institutional inquiry.
b)   Funding withdrawal.
c)   Legal consequences in severe cases.

Basic Mistakes to Avoid Plagiarism:-
Cite while writing avoid copy-paste.
*   Use quotations carefully.
*   Ask permission when required.
*   Credit images and visuals.

Importance of Ethics of Plagiarism:-
*   Ethical guidelines ensure safety, fairness, and accountability.
*   Researchers are accountable to society and the public.
*   Ethics protects human rights and animal welfare.
*   Research impacts society at both micro and macro levels.
*   Ethics builds trust, credibility, and integrity in research.

Objectives of Research Ethics:-
*   To protect the rights and interests of all human participants whether in writing paper or data collection involved in research whether old or new.
*   To ensure that research does not harm individual persons, groups, or society as a whole.
*   To evaluate research projects for ethical soundness, including risk management on subjects, confidentiality and informed to authors before use of data, text, pictures etc with their consent.
*   To promote ethical standards of research & intellectual property use across all disciplines such as social sciences, health sciences, medicine, journalism, education, and politics.
*   To encourage researchers to voluntarily follow ethical principles of plagiarism as part of professional and academic discipline.

Preventive Strategies of Plagiarism:-
Plagiarism reduces academic integrity and research credibility and also plagiarism preventing combined efforts from students, researchers, and institutions. The following strategies are widely recommended, are as follows:

1. Awareness and Education on Academic Integrity: Knowledge of citation styles and academic writing by organising workshops and orientation programmes and training this helps students in understanding plagiarism causes and how to avoid such mistakes

2. Proper Citation and Referencing: Researchers must acknowledge all sources using standard citation styles in their academia such as APA, MLA, Chicago, etc., to make sure proper credit goes to original authors.

3. Use of Plagiarism Detection Software: Researchers must review their work before submitting their manuscripts for publication should be checked through plagiarism detection tools to identify similarity issues. Examples: Grammarly, Turnitin, Copyscape, Quetext, Dupli Checker and Small SEO Plagiarism Checker, etc

4. Development of Research and Writing Skills: Students should develop skills in paraphrasing, summarizing, note-taking, and synthesizing information on their own, which reduces dependency on copying other text. Effective summarizing demonstrates research understanding of the source material.

5. Time Management and Academic Planning: Providing sufficient time for assignments to students and academic mentoring by their guides reduces pressure of scholars which often leads to plagiarism can be controlled. Many cases of plagiarism occur due to deadline pressure by proper planning, early research, notes and drafting of research outline reduce the temptation of copy- paste.

6. Institutional Policies and Strict Enforcement: Universities need clear and practical anti-plagiarism policies so that students and researchers understand what is acceptable and what is not. In India, the UGC introduced the Promotion of Academic Integrity and Prevention of Plagiarism in Higher Educational Institutions Regulations, 2018 to deal with academic misconduct in a systematic way. These rules explain how similarity will be checked and what kind of penalties will apply at different levels.

7. Promoting Research Ethics Culture: Creating a culture of honesty, originality, and ethical scholarship which encourages responsible research behaviour in researchers. In such culture mentors and supervisors play a crucial role in guiding students.

Discussion:-

The findings of this study indicate that plagiarism is not just an act of copying data. images and text from others, but it is a complex issue influenced by multiple academic, psychological, and institutional factors faced by researchers. In this digital age, the availability of vast online resources has made it easy access to researchers to access information sources, but it has also increased the temptation to copy-paste content without proper acknowledgment of the original author. Many students and researchers commit plagiarism due to insufficient knowledge of citation practices they follow in their research, a lack of training in research methodology and poor paraphrasing skills. Academic pressure and fear of failure often contribute to unethical plagiarism practices. The demand for publication, competitive academic environments among scholars, and tight deadlines sometimes push researchers toward shortcuts in their work. In some cases, plagiarism is intentional, or in the other hand, it would be by ignorance or accidental errors.

However, under academic regulations, both forms are considered unethical. The UGC (Promotion of Academic Integrity and Prevention of Plagiarism in Higher Educational Institutions) Regulations, 2018, provide a systematic mechanism to address plagiarism in India. The graded penalty system on students and faculty/members on the basis of similarity percentage ensures fairness and transparency in academic work among researchers. These regulations not only punish misconducting researchers but also aim to promote awareness and preventive measures within institutions. The study also highlights the importance of developing a strong ethical culture in academic institutions. Preventive strategies such as awareness programs, use of plagiarism detection software in research, proper citation practices like APA, MLA, Chicago, etc, academic mentoring by guides, and research skill development are essential to reduce research misconduct among scholars. Ultimately, preventing plagiarism is not only about strict enforcement of penalties on scholars but also about nurturing responsible scholars who value originality and intellectual honesty in academia.

Conclusion:-

Plagiarism remains one of the most serious challenges to academic integrity and research credibility in higher education. In the digital age, easy access to information from open sources has made it simpler, but it has also increased the responsibility to maintain originality in own research. Plagiarism arises due to a lack of research

methodology awareness, academic time management pressure, poor research practices, unawareness of citation styles and writing skills, misuse of technology, and gaps in institutional systems towards plagiarism. However, regulations alone are not enough to eliminate the problem of theft of the intellectual property of original authors. A lasting solution requires collective efforts from students, researchers, faculty members, and institutions to promote a strong culture of ethical research in their organisation. By increasing awareness, improving research training, encouraging originality in own ideas, creativity through proper note-making and implementing strict but fair policies can significantly reduce plagiarism among researchers. Ultimately, academic honesty is the base of foundation of any credible research, and preserving it is an essential step for the successful progress of education as well as society as a whole.

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