



ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Health Care Students and Professionals' Attitudes Towards Plagiarism.

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ABSTRACT:

The study is a quest for evidence. In building public trust, the consistency, knowledge, reliability, and credibility of scientific researchers as well as the authenticity of their work is important. It is the author's prerogative whether to publish plagiarised content or not, this cross-sectional study analyzed students' & professionals of health care' perceptions of plagiarism. The study was conducted at a medical university, where 1452 respondents were included. A multidisciplinary collaborative analysis consisting of 29 questions was performed on "Attitudes towards Plagiarism" at the university level. Out of 1112 out of 1452 responded giving a response rate of 76.5%. The Mean age of respondents was 28.6±7.9 years. There were 30.6% male and 69.4% female respondents. In this study, 290(26.1%) faculty members,

456(41%) postgraduates, 321(28.9%) interns, and 45(4%) final years were taken into consideration. The mean attitude score was 90.67 where a positive attitude was seen in 560(50.4%) and a negative attitude was seen in 552(49.6%) respondents. The attitude of health care students and faculty reflects the incomplete awareness with which plagiarism is interpreted. Among postgraduate, faculty, and students, knowledge of plagiarism should be strengthened, which clearly states that healthcare professionals have a positive attitude towards plagiarism.

Keywords: Attitude, Plagiarism, Health care professionals, Faculty, Postgraduates, Interns, Final Years.

INTRODUCTION

Recently the development of medical science research is accelerating as the progress of researchers and scientists is dependent on the exchange of information which happens via scientific papers and research. Conducting scientific research not only develops skills like critical and creative thinking, innovation, and reasoning but it may also contribute new findings that might potentially influence various fields; some genuine research contributes to the existing scientific knowledge (1). Competent medical research requires a great deal of effort, complete commitment, and serious & sustained constructive learning. The desirable output of a scientist is to have an excitement for the proof, thus the value of the paper is solely based on the originality of the content and the material (2). But with the rapid progress and advancement of the field, it is seen that more and more people are employing various unethical means for writing or publishing their work. Plagiarism is considered a violation of academic integrity in ethics and continues to be present in the text despite various similarity detection tools (3). Resemblance or duplication is the most distressing problem in front of the medical professionals which leads to academic shaming and other related issues, many software is available for detection of plagiarism but it fails to comply as the author may reframe the original content and leads to a lack of originality(4).

While for some plagiarism is unethical but for many others it is acceptable. Now since whether to copy or rephrase someone else's work is totally dependent upon the author, it is important that we assess people's attitudes towards it to know whether the person is susceptible to use such immoral means of writing. The author may or may not find plagiarism ethical. Research is, after all, a pursuit of the truth. The quality, expertise, reliability, and legitimacy of scientific researchers are essential in building public trust and plagiarism puts a serious negative impact on it which needs to be addressed immediately.

So we conducted a cross-sectional study using a standardized ATP questionnaire, the objective of which was to evaluate as well as analyze the participants' responses and perceptions of plagiarism.

METHODOLOGY

This was a cross-sectional study carried out after receiving the IEC from the Institutional Ethical Committee. It comprised a total of 1112 participants out of which 290 were faculty members, 456 were postgraduate students, 321 were interns and 45 were final year students. All participants who met the inclusion criteria were recruited for the study, along with their oral and written consent.

This was a questionnaire-based study in which the participants' perspective toward plagiarism was evaluated using the "Attitude Towards Plagiarism" or the ATP questionnaire. This is a standard method used to assess the perspective of individuals toward plagiarism. There are a total of 29 questions which were divided into two-factor structures. The factor I - a positive attitude toward plagiarism that represents the acceptance of such activity and rationale and factor II - is a negative attitude toward plagiarism which shows criticism and condemnation of plagiarism (5).

All the questions were scored based on a scale that had a total of five following categories: 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'neither agree nor disagree', 'disagree', and 'strongly disagree'.

Since this was a cross-sectional study, the Cochran Formula was used to calculate sample size; we included n =1452 samples. These questions were used to collect the data for comparing two attitudinal variables against plagiarism. The generated data was interpreted and statistically analyzed by the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software for study.

RESULT

Out of 1452 a total of 1112 respondents gave a response rate of 76.5%. The mean age of respondents' was calculated and it came out to be 28 ± 7.9 years, out of which 30.6% were male and 69.4% were female participants in the study.

The mean average score estimated was 90.67, where a positive attitude that is, people for whom plagiarism is acceptable was seen in 560(50.4%), and a negative attitude that is, people who find it unethical was seen in 552(49.6%) respondents.

DISCUSSION

Based on the cross-sectional study we have seen overall with respect to gender, faculty members, postgraduates, interns, and final year students that the percentage of a positive attitude toward the importance of plagiarism check is somewhat equal with the individuals having a negative attitude toward plagiarism even though the concerned university has a number of guidelines for curbing plagiarism. The positive attitude of such people for an acceptance of duplication or rephrasing had been backed up for many reasons. Stealing someone's work may be easier for some but it deeply affects the uniqueness of the studies. In today's world readers and other fellow scientists are constantly seeking new findings as well as discoveries, and about 50.4% of the people according to our survey think that plagiarism is acceptable which poses an alarming situation. Whereas about an equal number of respondents had a negative attitude towards it among which majority of these people are faculty members. Analyzing the responses received for the questions based on self-plagiarism we saw that a greater number of people had a positive attitude towards it. This gave us an idea that those who have a negative attitude and disapproval towards plagiarism, accept self-plagiarism which might be because some may argue that one cannot steal their own work.

As the respondents refer to an online platform such as various journals for more evidence-based practice as well as updating the knowledge of recent advances ongoing in the field, the originality, novelty, and authenticity are compromised due to an increased rate of duplication or rephrasing, which can indirectly impact evidence-based practice in clinical settings.

Recently a study was conducted in which an effective way to detect the similarity between two papers was shown. This was done by using some part of the paper content instead of all and decreasing the complexity; it was efficacious in detecting plagiarism even if the order of the words was changed (6). Such techniques help to maintain the novelty and distinctness of newly published works.

Some other studies evaluating people's attitudes towards plagiarism found that the participants who had a good hold of the English language or the individuals who attended English courses and workshops on scientific writing were less tolerant of plagiarism (4). In other studies, we have seen that new strategies regarding training in the English language shall be used to avoid plagiarism. Rathore et al. conducted a study on the role of workshops in changing attitudes towards plagiarism. It was found that there was a significant change in the attitude of the individual post-workshop. Hence a focused workshop on plagiarism can be conducted to change the attitude of medical professionals toward plagiarism (1). A review was conducted by P Mohan Kumar et al on knowing and avoiding plagiarism which showed using specific words from the provenance can be added by using quotations and citing them which not only supports the work and amplifies ideas but also avoids similarity (7).

In this cross-sectional study firstly, instead of analyzing all three factors, only two factors of the ATP questionnaire were analyzed. The third factor i.e. subjective norms toward plagiarism was not analyzed. Secondly, we conducted a survey of only one university. For future studies, all the universities of the region can be included which will provide comprehensive data for evaluating people's perception of plagiarism

CONCLUSION

Utilisation of plagiarism or duplication and rephrasing is completely relying on the authors so it is important to assess peoples' perception of it. In this cross-sectional study, we have seen that the positive attitude regarding plagiarism is more than negative, among faculty members, postgraduates, interns, and students. This shows that healthcare professionals have no negative impact on plagiarism. This suggests that while plagiarism is unethical and immoral, the majority of our participants are likely to plagiarise their content, as for them it is acceptable in certain conditions. Research papers and studies help us in gaining knowledge about the new development and findings which is absolutely necessary for the progress of the field, plagiarised content can impact this negatively hence there is an urgent need to change peoples' attitudes towards it.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

WMN conceptualized and supervised the manuscript, OCW and CAK contributed to the writing of the original draft, AN assisted in writing the draft, GN assisted in statistical analysis and finalizing the result, WMN OCW CAK did the writing, reviewing, and editing of the original draft.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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