Plagiarism: What, Why and Consequences

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Abstract- Plagiarism is considered academic dishonesty and a contravention of journalistic ethics This paper explains the various aspects of Plagiarism like what is plagiarism , What is the purpose behind plagiarism why it is done, it also includes the reasons why students and researchers plagiarize, to check the possibility of plagiarism there is 4-Stage plagiarism detection process like Collection, Analysis , Investigation and Confirmation, some case studies and possible consequences of plagiarism that depends on the severity of the plagiarism and the institutional policies.

Keywords- Plagiarism, consequences, paraphrasing, unawareness, Replication of words.

I.   INTRODUCTION

Plagiarism has become a serious concern for education industry. The vocabulary meaning of Plagiarism is to put into practice taking someone else's work or thoughts and showing them off as one's own. The word Plagiarism is derivative of Latin root: *plagiarius,* an abductor, and *plagiare,* to steal. It also includes:

* Replication of words or ideas without giving credit.
* Failing to put a quote in quotation marks.
* Altering words but sentence structure of the source remains same.
* Copying entire work from someone else, even if you give credit.
* Turning in someone else's work as your own.
* Giving erroneous information about the resource of the quotation.

There are many reasons why scholars plagiarize intentionally. It is not an unintended act, but something planned and done deliberately. The study reflects the following reasons of why students plagiarize:

Lack of Interest or Knowledge of the Subject: Students little interest or lack of interest in the subject force them to plagiarize the text from other sources. This lack of interest may be due to many factors like difficulty in concentration, habits of solving multiple choice questions, overloading, language lesson hours, syllabus, health problems, shortage of material or age etc. This lack of interest leads to lack of knowledge in the subject.

Improper Time Management: Poor defined goals can lead to shortage of time. Sometimes, it is known what needs to be done, but the students keep putting it off. Ultimately, when the deadline gets finished, they are under pressure to complete the task in time. Repeated procrastination can result in stress and poor performance.

Inefficient Writing Skills: Lack of creativity or practice causes inefficient writing skills. Writing is a long-term and on-going process. The enjoyment of writing process develops a greater understanding of the matter, appreciation for the purpose of writing and develops more efficient skills. Fear of taking risks in their own writing also pushes towards plagiarism. Students may not be familiar how to integrate the ideas and document the sources of those ideas appropriately in their texts.

To Get Personal or Professional Benefits: This is a major reason of plagiarism. People plagiarize to get salary hikes, promotions or to get good grades. The objective of completing the task completely to get astonishing results without efforts and within time is the reason of plagiarism.

Unawareness: Sometimes students are unaware of the difference between paraphrasing and plagiarism. Even if they know, they don't know the consequences of plagiarism. Awareness of avoiding plagiarism is a must.

Beyond all the above reasons, some people plagiarize because they believe whatever they do, they won't be caught. This feel of confidence is true because very few people are trapped, the first time they plagiarize. It gives them a false sense of security that they can't get stuck even if they do it again and again.

For successful plagiarism detection, it is very important to differentiate between the proper stages that may lead to plagiarism [1]. Figure 1. shows the continuum of collaboration, collusion and copying [1]. Collaboration is defined as a conversation between the students themselves about the specification of project and strategy of completing the work. It is necessary and acceptable for the inspiration of students. Collusion is when two students have to access the same study material while writing up their proposal. Copying is when one student writes up and passes it to another. This is definitely unacceptable. The arrows in the figure exhibit that collaboration is acceptable, but copying is not. There is no clear distinction between the two, as where plagiarism starts. It depends on upon the nature and the subject of assignments. If students do more than collude, they are plagiarizing. If students do more that collaborate than they may be plagiarizing. This continuum also serves as a caution for automated detection approaches that there may be some uncertainly acceptable collusion leading to small parts of two proposals being similar. This means that there will always be a need for a human decision to decide if copying has or has not occurred. Anything more than small segments of duplicated text can thus be judged as plagiarism. Ultimately, human assistance is must to identify the patches and the severity of plagiarism.
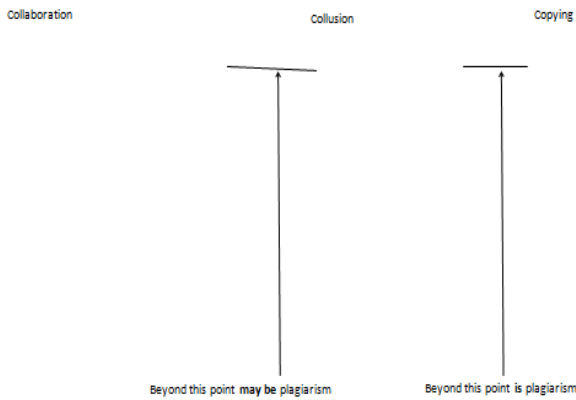
Fig.1: Collaboration, Collusion and Copying

II. PLAGIARISM DETECTION PROCESS

There is a 4-stage plagiarism detection process bywhich plagiarism can be found in the documents [2]. It is primarily designed to be used in combination with computerized systems. The first stage is corpus collection. Corpus is collected by the currently available Computing and Information Technology infrastructure and it is prepared for processing. Next, the corpus is put through analysis. It mainly deals with giving a single numeric similarity score to the document of the student. At this particular stage, there is no confirmation that plagiarism has occurred. Each highly ranked pair of student submissions now goes through a stage of confirmation. This is where a human manually verifies that each suspect pair does not represent a false positive, which is shown as a high degree of similarity but contains little similarity. There is no related method to confirm the true negatives, i.e. non-existence of missed pairs, which are pairs ranked low, but which contain similarities. The last stage of the Four-Stage Plagiarism Detection Process i.e. investigation is concluding. In this stage, human manually checks for true positives and true negatives. Also, it is also assessed whether the similarity constitutes plagiarism, or acceptable similarity, such as a properly cited common quotation. With the evidence collected, appropriate measures should then be taken. It is very vital to differentiate between plagiarism and similarity. Similarity can only be referred as plagiarism once it has been verified in by an instructor.
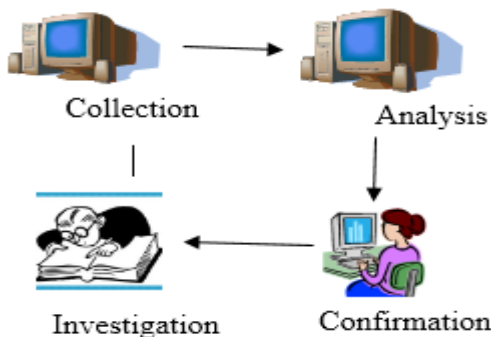

Fig.2.   4-stage Plagiarism Detection Process

III. CASE STUDIES

Following are the examples of known plagiarism cases that can be found in history. The examples vary from plagiarism of research articles to newspaper articles and musical work. Many have very serious consequences.

A case of plagiarism of research article has been mentioned in The Hindu Newspaper.

In 1992, a student from IIM Ahmadabad complained about plagiarism of a book. The Committee found that a significant text of the book "Quantitative Techniques for Managerial Decision" by U.K. Srivastva, G.V. Shenoy and S.C. Sharma has been copied from at least 10 sources which included some foreign and Indian books (Statistics for Management by Levin, Economic Theory and Operations Analysis by Baumol, Principles of Operation Research by Wagner) without acknowledgment of the source [3].

J. Couzin mentioned a case about data fabrication in an article in Science magazine [4].

A group of Ph.D. students along with their supervisor at the University of Wisconsin (UW), Madison was writing a proposal for the research grant. The scholars found some images, which had been already published, were being presented as a new unpublished work in the grant proposal. There were some results which were being manipulated for granting of approval. One of the lab students made the supervisor aware about this, but she overlooked. The grant proposal was accepted. The students informed the university officials about this fake activity. After the formal investigations, evidence of data manipulation and results fabrication were found. Some Frauds were also spotted in many other previous grant applications. The consequences of which was that the grants were cancelled and the data falsification report were forwarded to the federal office of Research Integrity (ORI), Washington for necessary action.

Thomas Matrka, a student of master's degree in Mechanical Engineering at Ohio University, during a search for some idea for his thesis proposal, found many instances of plagiarism. He reported this to a professor. One of the guilty gave the reason of financial problems, poor communication skills and no support from the family. After further investigation, the university found 39 graduate thesis, which were plagiarized in the last 20 years. The authors were instructed to revise their work. Some were also warned about the cancellation of their degree. A faculty who guided 11 theses which were plagiarized was castigated not to guide graduate students in the future [5].

A paper was submitted in the 8th International Conference on Computer and Information Technology (ICCIT-2005), by some authors. The paper was accepted and it was under revision process. After resubmission, when the organizers of the conference came to know about it, they revoked the paper acceptance and black listed the authors for all the upcoming conferences [6].

In the media industry, a reporter for the New York Times was found accused of using language from the Wall Street Journal for a story [7]. The reuse of language is not acceptable in news media. No matter, if the two articles in two different

newspapers are giving the same information, but the language used should be original. The newspapers have the policies to deal with plagiarism by writers. In this case, the reporter had to resign from his post for this deed.

Plagiarism is not limited to literary or scientific work, but it is spread over the fields of music, dance, arts, etc.

One example is an unauthorized copy of the musical material. George Harrison was found guilty plagiarizing the song "My Sweet Lord" in 1981. The maker had to pay a huge amount to Bright Tunes [8].

Recently, Samsung and Apple are suing each other for copying the designs of Smart Phones and Technology. Apple sought $2.75 billion from Samsung for infringing four design patents and three software patents. In counter, Samsung demanded $421.8 million for infringing five patents [9].

Thus, Plagiarism can be done by anyone from students to teachers or even researchers, great authors and musicians, intentionally or unintentionally. Proper precautions must be taken while writing. One should be aware of plagiarism issues. No one may notice the plagiarized work at present, but there is always a possibility of revealing copied work in future.

IV. POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES

The possible consequences of plagiarism depend on the severity of the plagiarism and the institution policy. Different magazines, journals, conferences have their own policy to deal with plagiarism noted down on the websites.

ACM has the following policy on plagiarism penalties [10].

"Verbatim copying, near-verbatim copying, or purposely paraphrasing a significant portion of another author's paper without citing the source and without clearly delineating (e.g., in quotation marks) the source material".

- The authors will be asked to write a formal letter of apology to the authors of the plagiarized paper, including an admission of the plagiarism.
- If the paper has appeared in the press, ACM will post a Notice of Plagiarism based on the investigation on the ACM Digital Library's citation page of the plagiarizing paper and will remove access to the full text. The paper itself will be kept in the database in case of future legal actions.
- If the paper is under submission, the paper can be automatically rejected by the Editor-in-Chief or the Program Chair without further revisions and without any further plagiarism investigation coordinated by the ACM Director of Publications. In addition, a letter of warning will be sent by the Editor-in-Chief or the Program Chair to the authors with a copy of the ACM Policy and Procedures on Plagiarism."

"Should the authors refuse to comply with the above (e.g., if they refuse to write a formal letter of apology) or if it is determined during the plagiarism investigation that there have been multiple violations of any of the above forms of plagiarism by the same authors, ACM retains the right to impose further sanctions such as automatic rejection of all current and future submissions for some extended period of time, invoking penalties prescribed by the ACM Codes of

Ethics, and possibly statutory/injunctive relief. U.S. Copyright law allows a copyright owner to seek a maximum of $150,000 in damages upon a determination of willful infringement of copyright."

IEEE categorizes plagiarism into 5 levels with level 5 to the highest degree of plagiarism. The policy of IEEE policy for plagiarism includes "letter of apology, Notice of violation of publication principles, and author prohibition up to 5 years". The letter of apology is required from the author of plagiarized material to the original author of the work. The notice of plagiarism is permanently attached to the material in the online database [11].

Many universities have their plagiarism policy written on the student guides. Duke University information bulletin for student 2009-10 has the following statement.

"Plagiarism" occurs when a student, with intent to deceive or with reckless disregard for proper scholarly procedures, presents any information, ideas or phrasing of another as if they were his or her own and/or does not give appropriate credit to the original source. Proper scholarly procedures require that all quoted material be identified by quotation marks or indentation on the page, and the source of information and ideas, if from another, must be identified and be attributed to that source. Students are responsible for learning proper scholarly procedures" [12].

The undergraduate guide defines the university policy as:

"Undergraduates acknowledge the right of the university to take disciplinary action, including suspension or expulsion, for failure to abide by the regulations or for other conduct adjudged unsatisfactory or detrimental to the university community. Students and groups may be held accountable for any violation of university policy that may or may not be included in this guide, whether on or off campus. In addition to local ordinances and state and federal laws, the following policies govern the undergraduate community" [12].

If a plagiarized material is found in thesis or dissertation work, the degree sought may even be revoked [17]. In some cases, even twenty years old thesis were also put to recheck to find possible plagiarized material and successfully detected the same.

The university of Waterloo mentions following possible penalties [13] is case of plagiarism:

- Letter of reprimand
- Disciplinary probation
- Grade penalty on an assignment, test, examination, or course; or, where applicable, failed to stand in a term or modification of final grade
- Failed work term
- Extra academic work
- Removal of privileges
- Additional course(s), possibly taken as Degree Requirement
- Suspension
- Expulsion
- Revocation of degree, diploma, certificate, standing or credit

All the are rules defined in the law for a case when the plagiarism activity involves copyright work. According to the copyright law of the United States, the copyright owner may seek up to 150,000$ in the case of willful infringement of copyright law [14].

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