

Plagiarism and Legal Research: Ethical Approach of Qualitative Research

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Abstract: *Research means a careful investigation and careful enquiry with an Endeavour to find relevant facts, which will be useful in the future. The purpose behind conducting research is to find solutions to a fundamental problem. If we have a quality research outcome, then it might lead to further improvements in the society, directly or indirectly. The basic aim and purpose of conducting research is to inculcate original thinking and analysis, but extensive copying and plagiarism counters such purpose. Not only plagiarism act as detrimental for the field of scholarship but it has been found that menace of plagiarism is prevalent among university students and it is affecting them in numerous tangible and intangible ways.*

Plagiarism is also regarded unethical because when a researcher forwards somebody else's work as his own original work, it might be regarded as a kind of fraud. It hurts the intellectual property right of the original owner, depicts disrespect of the researcher towards his peers and questions the integrity and honesty of the researcher. This paper is aimed at discussing the concept of plagiarism, its types, effects, reasons and how it affects the overall quality of a legal research. And in order to control plagiarism, it is very much essential to know the reasons behind it and then solving them in a systematic fashion. Besides plagiarism certain research ethics have been discussed because overall quality of a paper is directly or indirectly related to these ethics. Besides this, a researcher should strive for becoming an ethical researcher because then only he would be able to produce a good and quality standard research.

“Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal; bad poets deface what they take, and good poets make it into something better, or at least something different.”

-T.S.Eliot, the Sacred Wood.

INTRODUCTION

Research means a careful investigation and careful enquiry with an Endeavour to find relevant facts, which will be useful in the future. The purpose behind conducting research is to find solutions to a fundamental problem. If we have a quality research outcome, then it might lead to further improvements in the society, directly or indirectly. Changes in society can be achieved through certain parameters and research is one of them; hence it is very essential that it should be conducted in a truthful and systematic manner. A quality research seeks answers to a definite question by using pre- defined procedure and techniques.

Law has been regarded as a Tool for social change and legal research is a means to achieve the same. We generally conduct legal research because some aspects of a legal or socio- legal problem might have been left untouched or a particular problem needs reconsideration or in order to assess a different aspect of a particular problem. There might be intellectual ambitions behind conducting legal research, i.e. to understand the problem or to learn something new or to challenge yourself in new ways.

Research is generally divided into three categories and they are scientific research, Legal research and social science research. Despite categorization, the same basic ground rules apply to all the three areas of study.

A legal research can be conducted by adopting a hypothesis and by the end of the research the hypothesis is either proved or disproved. A researcher might work alone or with other peoples, who might be associated with the same area of study or in case of inter- disciplinary people from different fields can also be engaged.

The basic aim and purpose of conducting research is to inculcate original thinking and analysis, but extensive copying and plagiarism counters such purpose. Not only plagiarism act as detrimental for the field of scholarship but it has been found that menace of plagiarism is prevalent among university students and it is affecting them in numerous tangible and intangible ways.

Various reasons are cited to define the fact that why students resort to copying, one of the reason is the Lack of proper awareness among the students about the plagiarism. Some students consider that information should be freely available and transmitted and hence intentionally disregard the concept of plagiarism. Lack of time can also act as a negative motivation for students to resort to easy methods like copying or even outsourcing their assignment to paid online websites.

Plagiarism is also regarded unethical because when a researcher forwards somebody else's work as his own original work, it might be regarded as a kind of fraud. It hurts the intellectual property right of the original owner, depicts disrespect of the researcher towards his peers and questions the integrity and honesty of the researcher. In fact, the initial purpose of conducting research, i.e. to learn and to commit something new to the already existent knowledge, is corrupted. Not only does plagiarism harms the prospects of original author, but a person guilty of plagiarism has to face much criticism and under certain cases he might have to face severe penalties, both monetary and penal.

A plagiarized article is considered uninspiring, unreliable and of low quality and one incident of plagiarism might jeopardize the whole career of a scholar. However, with the initiation of internet era, plagiarism has increased manifold, because now material is available to the students with much ease, but the reliability of such matter is generally questionable.

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The primary attributes of a quality research paper are that it is well written, structured, clearly indicating the purpose throughout the study, describing and justifying the data collection methods, clarifying the results and the most importantly it should be original and non-plagiarized. This paper is aimed at discussing the concept of plagiarism, its types, effects, reasons and how it affects the overall quality of a legal research. And in order to control plagiarism, it is very much essential to know the reasons behind it and then solving them in a systematic fashion. Besides plagiarism certain research ethics have been discussed because overall quality of a paper is directly or indirectly related to these ethics. Besides this, a researcher should strive for becoming an ethical researcher because then only he would be able to produce a good and quality standard research.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is defined by Merriam Webster dictionary as “to use the words or ideas of other persons as if they were your own words or ideas”². In other words plagiarism can be understood as copying whole or a portion of work belonging to other person, without acknowledging his original contribution. A particular work is plagiarized when a person presents a work as his original work, i.e., self generated, when in reality he has copied ideas or core text from other articles.

Plagiarism has been described as ‘unoriginal sin’³ and ‘cancer that erodes the rich legacy of scholarship’⁴. It shows a non serious and disrespectful attitude of a student towards his course, professor and the institution. If a paper is plagiarized then the basic purpose behind framing a research paper is defeated and the standard of a paper is deteriorated.

Degree and form of plagiarism is not relevant and a single instance of plagiarism will make the whole paper plagiarized and while ascertaining plagiarism, intention of the author, whether bad or good, is irrelevant. Similarly, it is of least importance to consider that whether the original source was web based or library based. The *Harvard Guide to Using Sources* supports these arguments as it states that:

*“It doesn't matter whether the source is a published author, another student, a Web site without clear authorship, a Web site that sells academic papers, or any other person: Taking credit for anyone else's work is stealing, and it is unacceptable in all academic situations, whether you do it intentionally or by accident.”*⁵

Types of Plagiarism

Although an act of plagiarism would be counted as plagiarism despite its form or degree, but still it has been demarcated into various types and forms:

Verbatim Plagiarism- This is the most visible and severe type of plagiarism, wherein a person copies text word by word, in an unaltered fashion from the original source and without giving a proper clear citation or credit to the original author.

Mosaic plagiarism or patch writing- If there is a blur between original author and your idea or in other words copying small ideas or few words from the original source and interlinking them with your idea, without properly acknowledging, which gives a indication that the whole text is original, may amount to mosaic plagiarism.

Unintentional Plagiarism: When a researcher is following the authentic methods and sources, but omits to cite a source or when he paraphrase or quote poorly without citation, then also he would be guilty of plagiarism, although he did not had any intention to deceive or cheat.

Structure Plagiarism: In order to avoid verbatim plagiarism, many a time a researcher might paraphrase the original text and use the basic idea without citing the original author, then his act would be considered as structure plagiarism.

Self Plagiarism: If an author has generated a work on a previous occasion and later on use excerpts from that work without citing his own previous work, then he would be guilty of self plagiarism.

If the writer wishes to explain the original idea in his own words, then he should acknowledge the author to whom that idea belongs or else it would amount to un-cited paraphrasing, which can be considered as a form of plagiarism.

Why Plagiarism Is Considered Bad

Generally a particular thing is considered if its existence brings undesirable or unpleasant situations or results. Plagiarism is termed bad because its existence weakens the threads of scholarly work and injures the prospect of research. Some of the logics that are forwarded to explain the ‘bad’ nature of plagiarism are:

² Merriam Webster. Web. available at: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/plagiarize> (Last visited at: 11:26 am 8/30/2015).

³ Colon, A. “Avoid the pitfalls of plagiarism”. Writer. 2001. 114 (1), p. 8.

⁴ Zangrando, r. L. “Historians procedures for handling plagiarism”. *Publishing Research Quarterly*. 1992. pp. 57–64.

⁵ *What Constitutes Plagiarism?*. Harvard Guide to Using Sources. available at: <http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k70847&pageid=icb.page342054>. (last visited at 11:44am 8/30/2015)

- If undetected and properly addressed, plagiarism might develop into a habit of the researcher and true qualities of a researcher can never be generated in him.
- If an institute does not follow stringent internal plagiarism checks, then it might devalue its reputation if the students are caught for plagiarism, somewhere else. Hence it is essential that both the faculty and students take collective steps to stop plagiarism.
- A research paper might have parts that contain very useful and novel contents but if portion of it is plagiarized, then overall quality will be eroded.
- It defeats the basis purpose and aim behind conducting research.
- It amounts to passing over somebody else's hard work and valuable resources.
- Besides grades, it dilutes the primary purpose of conducting research, i.e. to discover the unknown.

Reasons for committing plagiarism

Once it is known that a particular thing or situation is bad. We strive to know about it thoroughly, so that it can be avoided or eradicated in future instances. In case of plagiarism, the most debated questions is that what motivates students or writers to commit plagiarism. It is important to know because finding an answer to this question will lead us to the solution of countering the menace of plagiarism.

Although traces of plagiarism can be found in various fields of study and even the highest ranks of scholars are not immune to it but it has been found that the most affected people are the research scholars and university students and most commonly reasons cited for plagiarism by scholars and students are:

- (a) Lack of detailed awareness about plagiarism among students.
- (b) Many students consider that information should be freely available and transmitted and hence disregard the concept of plagiarism intentionally.
- (c) Lack of time can also be a reason for students to resort to easy methods like copying or even outsourcing their assignment to paid online websites.
- (d) If a student thinks that he incapable of writing a quality paper then he might incline to copy- pasting or paraphrasing.
- (e) Some students want to publish their articles at any cost and as a result they might steal ideas or copy edited or paraphrase text from articles published in reputed journals, to make their article look promising.

Mater Sociomed in has explained some possible reasons behind committing plagiarism as:

*"Following trends of academic promotion and research funding, this entails the use of extensive text on the principle of "publish at all costs" or "Perish mantra"; Personal ambitions of poorly educated individuals; financial pressure."*⁶

The next step in the direction would be fixing the problem and if proper measures are adopted, the risk of plagiarism can be minimized or at some point of time it might be completely eradicated.

How to Counter Plagiarism

"It's not necessarily bad intent," Tom Dee says⁷. "It's just bad practices." He conducted an empirical study⁸ on group of students before and after they were imparted tutorials on plagiarism and in the end it was found that once the students were made aware about the plagiarism, the plagiarism level declined sharply.

So it can be suggested that students should be first properly instructed about the contents, forms and other aspects of plagiarism before they are required to submit research writing.

Some of the suggested methods through which plagiarism can be countered are:

- Choosing a topic of interest, because being familiar with the topic, the researche will try to write in his own words and rely upon his own ideas.
- At the academic front, proper awareness and understanding about plagiarism should be generated.
- Paper should be formatted in a precise and uniform manner.
- Students should be asked to submit at least two rough drafts, before the submission of final report.
- Citing the source at the same time when a text is picked from a paper.
- Try not to read a particular paper repetitively, because the researcher might develop inclination towards his ideas.
- In case there is doubt with respect to citation, it is always advisable to give a proper citation.

Why plagiarism detection is important:

The basic purpose of research is to discover new facts or to understand the existing ones more holistically and the same goal is blurred or defeated if the scholar has resorted to plagiarism, instead of developing his own ideas or understanding.

Plagiarism is a serious offence and the same can be inferred from the real life examples of plagiarism and their consequences.

Harvard University student *Kavya Vishwnathan* was accused of plagiarizing her debut novel, *How Opel Mehta Got Kissed*. Later on she had to apologize and return the received royalties.

⁶ Masic,I. "Plagiarism in Scientific Research and Publications and How to Prevent It". *Materia- socio medica*. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24944543> .2014 Apr. pg: 141-146. (last visited on 23 sept, 2015)

⁷ Professor at the graduate school of education at Stanford.

⁸ Dee, Thomas and Jacob, Brian. *Rational ignorance in education:a field experiment in student plagiarism national bureau of economic research* . NBER working paper no 15672. Massachusetts Avenue Cambridge. January 2010.

Melissa Elias was president of the Madison School Board, but had to resign when one of her speech was found to be plagiarized.

Plagiarism not only attracts academic censures, but if copyright violations are involved then under certain cases, a person might attract heavy monetary penalty or a jail term as well. Hence it becomes very important to detect plagiarism at the very beginning of the research evaluation.

Izet Masic describes that one of the important feature of plagiarism detection is that it improves quality of the research, he states that:

“The aim of combating plagiarism is to improve the quality, to achieve satisfactory results and to compare the results of their own research, rather than copying the data from the results of other people’s research. Copy leads to incorrect results⁹.”

Plagiarism can be detected both manually as well as through web based tools; however the online available Anti- plagiarism software are generally preferred because they consume less time and deemed more accurate. Using online based anti plagiarism software is important because it broadens the scope of search, because they access a variety of databases, which will take months, if done manually. Another reason is that the software highlights the content in various colors according to the degree of similarity. A researcher can also take the help of these software by perform an initial check of his paper and to save from future embarrassment and failures.

Plagiarism detection software has manifold advantages and some of them have been discussed in the article ‘Overview and Comparison of Plagiarism Detection’ as:

“Copyrights and legal aspects for use of published documents also can be covered by using plagiarism software, so it can show whether this person has legally or illegally copied the documents or not and it also show the whether this person has permission from the owner to use this document or not. Plagiarism detection is also one of the most important issues to journals, research center and conferences; they are using advanced plagiarism detection tools to ensure that all the documents have not been plagiarized, and to save the copyrights from violation for the publishers.¹⁰”

Disadvantages of Plagiarism Software:

Rebecca Moore Howard¹¹ pointed out that because of online anti plagiarism software, a student has to prove that he is innocent before his work can be read.

Other major disadvantages of anti- plagiarism software are: “

1. It does not come free in most of the cases
2. Student data and student work are being made available to third parties
3. Detects only collusion among students, and cannot detect material downloaded from the Web
4. Students actually have to sit down to a test to fulfill the requirements
5. Formatting is lost in the checking procedure, so essays for marking have to be submitted separately from essays for checking
6. Sometimes unsystematic and labor-intensive, involves manual entry of strings.¹²”

Importance of Citation

A well researched article is generally built and supported by existing knowledge and writings, thus quoting from others work is essential and relevant. Plagiarism does not prohibit a writer from quoting or coping, but the only requirement is to give a proper acknowledgment to the original author. Quality of a research paper also depends upon the cited sources, i.e. a paper would be termed well written and researched if the credible sources are used, and for example, quoting from a paper published in reputed journal or a good book would increase the overall quality of research writing. On the other hand quoting from sources such as Wikipedia is not termed as relevant, because such sources are not considered reliable and credible within the academic circles.

A Paper would be termed original if the writer is using a material which is in common knowledge, then it does not need citation or acknowledgment, but whenever there is ambiguity in deciding whether a source is common or otherwise, it shall be cited. Even if a person is using a work created by him at a previous instance, he has to cite the source or else it would amount to plagiarism.

Shaun Best described the importance of citation as: *“A truthful research is an attempt to find evidence to support arguments and provide a more convincing account that is more substantial than our unsupported personal opinion.”¹³*

Importance of citation has also been discussed by Robert Harris as:

“Citing a source, whether paraphrased or quoted, reveals that they have performed research work and synthesized the findings into their own argument. Using sources shows that the student is engaged in “the great conversation,” the world of ideas, and that the student is aware of other thinkers’ positions on the topic. In a nutshell, citing helps make the essay stronger and sounder and will probably result in a better grade. Appropriate quoting and citing also evidences the student’s respect for the creators of ideas and arguments honoring thinkers and their intellectual property.¹⁴”

Generally scores of citations methods or styles are available, but most commonly used citation styles are:

⁹ Supra note 5.

¹⁰ Asim, M; Ali, Tahir; Abdulla, Dahwa and Snasel, Vaclav. *Overview and Comparison of Plagiarism Detection Tools*. Department of Computer science, University of Ostrava. Czech Republic. Web. <http://ceur-ws.org/Vol-706/poster22.pdf>

¹¹ Professor of Writing, Syracuse University

¹² Vij, Rajeev; Kumar, Navin and Makhdumi Soni. *Encouraging Academic Honesty through Anti-plagiarism Software*.

¹³ Best, Shaun. *Understanding and doing successful research: Data collection and analysis for the social science*, Routledge. 2nd ed. 2013. New York. Routledge. Print.

¹⁴ Robert Harris . *Anti-Plagiarism Strategies for Research Papers*. Virtual Salt. Version Date: May 18, 2015. Available at: <http://www.virtualsalt.com/antiplag.htm>

- (a) MLA (Modern Language Association);
- (b) Chicago
- (c) APA(American Psychology Association)

And it is also important that a uniform citation method should be used throughout a research project.

RESEARCH

A research is conducted to add something 'new' to the existing lot of information already available. It is not necessary that such new information should be novel or unique but it should be original and copy work should be avoided. Also, the original findings of a good research paper would relate to society in one way or other. If data is used in analyzing a situation then such data should be verifiable from independent sources.

Research is a rigorous process and in order to conduct a quality research, there are a variety of factors which a researcher must control. There are both positive and negative factors and efforts should be made to maximize the positive and minimize the negative factor.

A research paper should be conducted pre-planned and researcher should keep a control over the study, such that, nothing should be added which is not associated or helpful with respect to the chosen research problem.

Todd Litman defines the basic characteristics of a good research document as:

¹⁵"A good research document provides a comprehensive overview of an issue and discusses its context. This can be done by referencing books and websites with suitable background information."

Clarity of arguments is another important aspect and the paper should not be laden with ambiguities, which in turn will confuse the reader from the main topic. In order to develop and maintain the reader's interest, a research should be concise, interesting and coherent.

¹⁶"Research quality is an epistemological issue (related to the study of knowledge). It is important to librarians (who manage information resources), scientists and analysts (who create reliable information), decision-makers (who apply information), jurists (who judge people on evidence) and journalists (who disseminate information to a broad audience)."

¹⁷"A good research document provides a comprehensive overview of an issue and discusses its context. This can be done by referencing books and websites with suitable background information."

Concept of 'Originality'

"There is no unified legal definition of either the term 'originality' or neither there exists any minimum threshold of originality¹⁸"

Time and again it has been asserted that a research should be original, i.e. it should contribute something new to the already existing knowledge or it means pursuing such goals that have been left un-pursued. But at the very beginning, it is very difficult for a researcher to know with certainty that whether he is conducting an original research or duplicating someone else work. Safeguard to such a problem is that before starting, a researcher should take a layman's overview of that particular area of study by conducting proper literature review and should avoid choosing a topic which has been repetitively exhausted.

There are various parameters available to assess the originality of a particular literature. P. Cryer has discussed some of the aspects as:

"A project can be original in terms of: (1) tools, techniques, procedures, and methods; (2) exploring an unknown; (3) exploring something unanticipated; or (4) using data in a novel way¹⁹."

Originality as an opportunity to learn and grow is essential while writing a paper but it does not mean that the work should be completely disassociated with what has been already written or researched upon, what it means is that the writer has to contribute his own inputs or viewpoint on a particular idea or topic. If a first term student is asked to write an original paper, then it does not mean that he should make an original contribution to that field of study but in reality the professor wants to make sure that student puts forward his own original ideas and develop a sound understanding on the subject.

Sometimes an author might have explained one aspect of an idea, and then another paper might build upon the same idea while dealing with different problem, or the same idea and same path can be traced but leading to an altogether different result. There might be instances where the researcher has to use some data from the original work of another author; in such a case, proper citation or acknowledgment is essential.

Readymade Research

The students are often misled by the online websites providing customized papers as per their personal requirements; these websites are known as *paper mill*²⁰, which promises to provide an original, plagiarism free and customized research paper. But in reality these so-called customized papers are generally of poor quality, unreliable, not well researched, not connected to core issue and very often plagiarized. Besides plagiarism, this kind of practices harms the very basic purpose behind giving assignment writings, i.e. to make the student familiar about the topic and the

¹⁵ Litman, Todd. *Evaluating Research Quality Guidelines for Scholarship*. 22 February 2012. Victoria Transport Policy Institute. available at: <http://www.vtpi.org/resqual.pdf>

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Krapez, Katarina. "The (Un)Originality Of Scientific Papers – An Analysis Of Professional Quality Standards". *International conference on knowledge, innovation and management*. Jun 19- 21, 2013. Zadar, Croatia. Web. available at: <http://www.toknowpress.net/ISBN/978-961-6914-02-4/papers/ML13-342.pdf>

¹⁹ Cryer, P. *The Research Student's Guide to Success*. 3rd ed. 2006. Philadelphia. Open University Press. Print.

²⁰ Term *Paper Mill* was used by David B. Resnik

research methods. Hence, if he orders a readymade paper then the student doesn't gain anything and there is lack of self fulfillment and money wastage. Very often these ready-made papers are simply recycled from previously available similar papers and might mismatch from the theme of the concerned students writing style, which makes it prone to plagiarism and additionally there is no guarantee for the quality of the paper.

Quality Research

Research quality is assessed from a variety of factors and importance of quality is a determining factor for the reliability and validity of the research. Research quality plays a determining factor, when a particular paper is considered for publication by the editor of a reputed journal.

Some of the important tests for ascertaining the quality of a research paper are:

Reliability: Is the research reliable, that is, if somebody else would conduct the investigation by using the same methods, would he get the similar results. Although there might be some variations, but in totality, a research should be consistent.

No biasness: Research should be visibly and practically unbiased, because a true researcher will analyze the information neutrally to reach a conclusion. But if there are pre conceived notions of biasness, then it would mean that research has been conducted to reach a definite result and not to reach an answer to a problem.

Validity: It means whether the study is successful in measuring or obtaining the result which the researcher was intending to measure or obtain.

Specific and not generalized: Generally research is conducted to obtain an answer to a specific problem or question.

Throughout the paper, the research should be focused and related to the research problem.

Additionally the research should have following characteristics as well²¹:

- It is based upon theoretical framework.
- It builds upon the existing knowledge and offers something new by the end.
- Its outcome shall have some relation with real world problems.
- The research should be conducted in ethical manner and for ethical purpose.
- Instead of forwarding a rigid solution, a research should focus upon offering a result which can form a starting point for further study.

Qualities of a Good Researcher

In order to conduct a holistic and quality research work, the researcher should have some basic research attributes and skills. He must have proper knowledge about various data sources, data collection tools, formulation of good research design, plagiarism and research ethics. Some of the essential qualities that every researcher, irrespective of his domain of study should enjoy are:

*“Interest, motivation, inquisitiveness, commitment, sacrifice, excelling, knowledge, recognition, scholarly approach, and integration.”*²²

The researcher should be properly trained in doing research before he is assigned any topic to research. He should be well aware of his research topic, different data collection techniques, a clear objective and aim to conduct the research and availability of enough funds and time.²³ He should know how to transform his research queries or hypothesis into a reliable draft for conducting research. As there are variety of research tools are available for conducting research, so it is very essential for a good researcher to have proper awareness and technique of using such tools. He should know which tool will be best suitable in conducting a particular part of research design.

Besides practical and theoretical aspects of research, honesty of a researcher is of foremost importance and General Medical Council describes some basic attributes of an honest and ethical researcher as²⁴:

1. *“You must conduct research honestly. You must report evidence of financial or scientific fraud, or other breaches of this guidance, to an appropriate person in your employing or contracting body.*
2. *You must be open and honest with participants and members of the research team when sharing information about a research project. You must answer questions honestly and as fully as possible.*
3. *You must make clear, accurate and legible records of research results, as soon as possible after the data are collected. You must keep records for the appropriate period to allow adequate time for review, further research and audit, or to help resolve any concerns about the data or research project.*
4. *You must report research results accurately, objectively, and promptly in a way that can be clearly understood.*
5. *You must make sure that research reports are properly attributed and do not contain false or misleading data.”*
6. *Whenever possible, you should publish research results, including adverse findings, through peer-reviewed journals.*
7. *You should make research findings available to those who might benefit. You should make reasonable efforts to inform participants of the outcome of the research, or make the information publicly available if it is not practical to inform participants directly.*

A researcher who would follow these basic guidelines of honesty and other features of research would be able to produce a work which is worth reading and implementation.

²¹10 *Qualities of a Good Research Purpose and/or Questions*. Michigan State University. 2003. available at: <http://web.cortland.edu/shis/651/GoodRQQualities.pdf>

²² Preya, Toledo and Luis. *Ten qualities of a good Researcher*. Journal of Investigative Surgery. Volume 25, Issue 4. 2012. Pg 201-202.

²³ *Principles of Good Research & Research Proposal Guide*. The Policy, Performance and Quality Assurance Unit, Tamsin White. London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames. Available at: http://www.richmond.gov.uk/research_proposal_guide.pdf

²⁴ *Good practice in research: Honesty and integrity. Principles of Good Research Practice*. General Medical Council, U.K. available at: http://www.gmc-uk.org/guidance/ethical_guidance/6005.asp

Research Ethics

In our day to day life we follow certain rules and adhere to a certain behavior, which is termed as ethical. Similarly, a researcher has to abide by certain ethics while conducting his work and these principles are generally common to all kinds of research. As a true researcher, a person should follow such principle voluntarily and the same should reflect from his research process, design and its outcome.

There can be variety of ethics that a researcher should abide and some of them are discussed here:

(a) **Honesty**: A true researcher should present the true and actual facts and position and refrain from introducing, fabricated, false or plagiarized information.

(b) **Objectivity**: A researcher should avoid biasness in while conducting his work. Although he might have a particular position with respect to a particular problem but his work should not reflect the one sided approach.

(c) **Integrity**: Especially in case of Empirical research, a researcher should fulfill his agreements and strive for consistency.

(d) **Carefulness**: He should be very careful while relying upon certain data and leaving the other portion. One of the reasons cited for plagiarism is that the researcher was unaware of the fact that he is committing plagiarism. But the same can be avoided if the researcher acts carefully and diligently.

(e) **Respect for Intellectual Property**: Intellectual Property Rights signify that their owner has spent time, resources and skill in creating that work. If these rights are not honored, then it will prove detrimental to the owner and neither will it contribute anything new to the field of study. This is the primary reason behind the introduction of the concept of plagiarism.

(f) **Confidentiality**: If some confidential information is included while conducting research, then same should not be breached or leaked by the researcher.

(g) **Social Responsibility**: One of the main reasons for conducting researcher is to solve the societal problems and it is expected that a researcher will not involve into anti- societal conduct.

(h) **Legality**: A researcher should not commit or involve into illegal acts while conducting research.

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt in the fact that quality of a research paper and plagiarism are related vice -versa to each other; which means a good quality research paper will contain no plagiarism and as the level of plagiarism will increase, the quality of the paper will start eroding.

Plagiarism is considered unethical and a research work containing plagiarism would also be termed as unethical and such a work would be signified as poor in quality. A researcher should also abide by the code of conduct accorded to a researcher and should refrain from any unethical acts while conducting his work.

With the flourishing of online research, the method of cut-copy-paste has also flourished and this has further worsened the situation, because instead of sweating in library, now many researchers rely on the comfort zone of their computer arena and most the time what they find on internet is unreliable or unverified data or information. It has been found time and again that University students are the most affected from this evil because they generally need to complete research assignments effortlessly or there might be lack of time or they lack detailed awareness about the basic concept of plagiarism. These practices lead to unjustifiable solutions to the research problem and overall quality of research degrades.

Although internet has led to increase in the instances of plagiarism but on the brighter side it has led to a revolution in detecting plagiarism because now a wide range of anti- plagiarism software are available, which have made plagiarism detection a effortless and swift task. Anti-plagiarism software even demarcates the level of plagiarism and search is conducted through variety of database, thereby making it very hard to evade plagiarism detection and ensuring that the very first criteria of a good research is followed, i.e. originality.

The researcher should be experienced in data selection technique, because there is a vast ocean of data available on the internet and if not properly analyzed and verified, it might lead to a poor quality of research. It is very important to rely on authentic and reputed journals like *Harvard Law Journal*, because before publication, its articles have to undergo different stages of focused review and editing. Following such practice will improve the overall quality of the research and this will definitely contribute something positive and concrete to the area of study.

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