

# Borrowed Words, Broken Ethics: Addressing Plagiarism in Academia

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Plagiarism in academia is a notorious and emerging phenomenon that violates the essence of values in the academic fraternity, such as intellectual honesty, trust and originality. It is a theoretically, empirically, and technologically informed chapter that provides a deep analysis and starts by providing a contextual picture of the historical and philosophical basis of plagiarism and intellectual property. It uses ethical theories, including ethical deontology, consequentialism, and virtue ethical theories, to understand moral reasoning, and discusses cultural and educational factors that affect how people perceive plagiarism. There are challenges in establishing intent and accountability that are reflected in global case studies. Academic pressure, cultural misperceptions, and lack of policy are some root causes explored in the chapter, as well as their consequences to individuals and institutions. Finally, it states that fighting plagiarism not only needs enforcement but also needs a culture of academic integrity that is durable to absorb the transformation of technology.*

## INTRODUCTION

Plagiarism, which is traditionally described as a representation of another person's words, thoughts, or intellectual activities without due credit, has become one of the

key ethical problems in science and research circles. It touches the core of academic honesty and corrupts the concept of the knowledge creation and spread on which it is premised. The practice of plagiarism has been on the rise because it has become more visible and more complex, starting at the student level with young people in undergraduate and postgraduate courses, moving up to faculty and researchers and gaining a lot of concern among society and institutions take a lot of specific interest. The circle of academics survives on originality, openness, and proper source accreditation. Plagiarism is an irregularity that challenges not just the morals of individuals but the institutional futility of academia in publishing, managing and rating scholarly contributions. Even though tradition has regarded plagiarism as an issue of personal malpractices, modern-day rhetoric is establishing a wider socio-academic context of the sins, such as performance pressures, technological advancement, education disparities, and cultural relativism.

Caused by the various forces and having numerous forms, plagiarism is a matter that demands a delicate interpretation. It is not bothersome to just copy the material, but could be through small misattributions, improper paraphrasing, or even repurposing of the already published material without any disclosure. Velmurugan (2024) and Akbar (2018) note that the very definition of plagiarism is not unanimous either in terms of disciplines or cultures. The divergence between permissible reutilization and the misappropriation of ideas has been progressively obscured; however, the emergence of generative AI tools that generate text at an intense level with comparatively little human input is another reason (Eacersall et al., 2024; Ka & Chan, 2023).

The honesty during the research and learning process is significant. It is through integrity that scholarship maintains credibility, the students come out with the skills they are assumed to have, and research provides truth to the body of knowledge. The breaches to such integrity undermine such trust, not only trust in particular people but also institutions, or even academic fields. As it is stressed by Macfarlane, Zhang, and Pun (2014), academic integrity underlies the legitimacy of higher education itself.

Moreover, the digitalization of the process of teaching and researching has also brought about opportunities and weaknesses. On the one hand, online databases and tools for managing citations have simplified the work of scholarship in general; on the other, an online space can simplify copying, pasting, spinning, or creating with minimal moderation. Indeed, as Eshet (2025) shows in his analysis of plagiarism trends in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, academic dishonesty has been pronounced due to the sudden transition to online learning and evaluations, and it is even more critical that institutions change their ethical standards.

This chapter seeks to unpack the complex nature of academic plagiarism regarding the history surrounding the phenomenon, the philosophies behind this malpractice, its categorization, and its case studies in the real world. It also explores how plagia-

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