



Sabbar, S., Masoumifar, A., & Mohammadi, S. (2019). Where we don't know how to be ethical; A research on understanding plagiarism. *Journal of Iranian Cultural Research*, 12(3), 1-27. doi: 10.22035/JICR.2019.2243.2747

Doi: <https://dx.doi.org/10.22035/JICR.2019.2243.2747> URL: http://www.jicr.ir/article_392.html

2008-1847 / © The Authors. This is an open access article under the CC BY 4.0 license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>).

Where We Don't Know How to be Ethical; A Research on Understanding Plagiarism

Shaho Sabbar¹, Ali Masoumifar², Saeed Mohammadi³

Received: Apr. 05, 2019; Accepted: Jun. 26, 2019

Extended Abstract

This study aims to investigate if people and mainly students are aware of ethical rules of conducting academic work. If students copy materials from other papers and books without proper citation, is it mainly because they do not know the regulations governing referencing academic works? To answer this question and questions regarding other ethical rules of academic work, an online questionnaire was used, through which people were asked specific questions about specific ethical issues. The results showed that even highly educated people did not have sufficient knowledge of the ethical rules and regulations of academic work. The results also indicated that a majority of the respondents preferred to answer an even technical and difficult question with a wrong answer rather than choosing "I don't know".

Keywords: academic ethics, plagiarism, referencing, source

1. Assistant Professor of Communication & Iranian Studies, Faculty of World Studies, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran (Corresponding Author).

✉ shaho.sabbar@ut.ac.ir

2. Graduate of Technological Systems Management, Department of Technology and Society, Stony Brook University, New York, United States.

✉ ali.mass@stonybrook.edu

3. PhD Student of North American Studies, Faculty of World Studies, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran.

✉ saeed.mohammadi@ut.ac.ir



INTRODUCTION

This study aims to investigate people's knowledge of ethical and quality standards of academic writing. Many academicians complain that in Iran university students and even some PhD graduates do not comply with ethical rules of academic work in their assignments and/or the papers they submit for publication. One should ask, is this mainly because they choose not to take the ethical rules seriously or is it because they are simply not aware of those rules. This is the question that the article aims to address.

PURPOSE

This paper aims to measure the levels of awareness about the guidelines that govern the standards of ethics and rigor in academic work, and the relationship between this level of awareness and the amount of formal education that individuals have received.

METHODOLOGY

An online survey was conducted that asked participants about their views on certain key questions regarding Academic ethics and standards. These include: citing publications of low credibility, the acceptable ratio of direct quotation, publishers' consent on the use of material for which they own the intellectual rights, the simultaneous submission of manuscripts to multiple journals for evaluation, and copying references from other papers to be added to one's own paper. Data was gathered and analyzed from some 500 participants with different levels of education.

RESULT

The analysis of survey results showed that a high percentage of participants did not possess an accurate understanding of the accepted rules of ethical academic work, as it relates to conducting of research and the authorship of academic papers. Furthermore, this investigation suggests that participants were less inclined to use the "I don't know" option in answering survey questions even when the question concerned a matter that required a high level of specific expertise and thus knowledge of the correct answer was not expected of the majority of the participants.

CONCLUSION

There is no clear set standard that can ascertain what level of knowledge ability on professional academic ethics is sufficient or low. However, comparative research and meta-analysis can help provide a relational understanding of Iran's situation as compared to international levels. In addition, longitudinal studies can track changes and trends that can show the worsening or improvement of the overall situation in

the span of time. In any case, research results show that only in two instances, where the answers seem fairly straightforward, a large percentage of the participants chose the correct answer. These include the following: 1) it is necessary to attain the consent of domestic publishers before republishing their materials; 2) it is unacceptable to copy the citations one sees in an academic work, instead of citing the work at hand. In the other four instances 43 to 63 percent of the participants did not know the correct standards, and one cannot deem such results as desirable or even acceptable by any standards.

NOVELTY

This research revealed that students, even those at graduate level, are surprisingly ignorant of the academic ethical rules. This was acquired by confronting the students with specific and direct questions. They made an interesting set of questions, which to the best of our knowledge, had not been used in many other research works. Moreover, interesting lines were drawn between the students' knowledge of the ethical rules of academic work and their level of education, as well as, their willingness to admit their ignorance. The results seem to be valuable for academics in their educational and managerial efforts.



Iranian Cultural Research

Abstract

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Atrak, H. (2017). Čisti-ye Elm-e Robāei dar Axlāq-e Pažuheš [The Essence of Plagiarism in Research Ethics]. *Journal of Ethics in Science and Technology*. 12(3), 9-19.
- Changizi Ashtiani, S., & Shamsi, M. (2013). Serqat-e elmi dar tārikh-e Pezeški: Kāšef-e gardeš-e xun-e riyavi, Ebn-e Nafis ya William Harvey [Plagiarism in medical history: The discoverer of pulmonary circulation, Ibn-Nafis or William Harvey]. *History of Medicine Journal*. 5(15), 177-190.
- Feli, S., Biglari, N., & Pezeshki Rad, Gh. (2012). Negareš va Raftār-e Daneshjouyan-e Dāneshkaede-ye Keshāvarzi-e Daneshgāh-e Tarbiat Modares dar Zamine-ye serqat-e elmi [Attitude and Behavior of the Students of college of Agricultur at Tatbiat Modarres University]. *The Quarterly Journal of Research and Planning in Higher Education*. 133-151.
- Ghafouri, M., Rakhs, F., & Rahafrooz, S. (2016). Mizān-e āšnāi-ye ketābdāran-e pezeški bā rāhkārḥā-ye moqābele bā serqat-e adabi [Evaluation of medical librarian's familiarity with plagiarism]. *Journal of Health Administration*. 72-84.
- Golestani, M. (2017). Bāzxāni-ye Nazariye-ye Michel Foucault darbāre-ye Marg va Kārkard-e Mo'alef va nesbat-e ān bā serqat-e adabi [Rereading Michel Foucault's theory of death and the function of the author and its relation to plagiarism]. *Kimiyā-ye-Honar, The Quarterly Periodical of the Research Institute of the Arts*. 57-68.
- Jaffari, M., Rezaeeyan, A., & Shamsi, F. (2016). Šekāf-e akhlāqi dar Zamine-ye hanjārḥā-ye kārbord-e ettelā'āt [The ethical gap in information usage norms]. *The Journal of Ethics in Science and Technology*. 97-107.
- Mansouri, M. (2017). Serqat-e adabi-ye jadid bā Raveš-e Kohan [New plagiarism with old method]. *Literary Criticism*. 199-209.
- Mason, P. R. (2009). Plagiarism in scientific publications. *The Journal of Infection in Developing Countries*, 3(01). doi:10.3855/jidc.98
- Maurer, H., Kappe, F., & Zaka, B. (2006). Plagiarism; A survey. *Journal of Universal Computer Science*, 12(8), 1050-1084. doi: 10.3217/jucs-012-08-1050
- Mohammad-Hosseinpour, R., Bagheri Nevisi, R., & Afzali Shahri, M. (2017). Barresi-ye dalāyel-e ertekāb-e serqat-e adabi va rāh-hāye pišgiri az ān dar jāme'e-ye elmi-e Iran: Didgāh-e sardabirān, asātid va dānešjuyān [Study of the reasons for plagerism and its prevention in Iranian scientific society: The viewpoint of editors, professors and students]. *Foreign Language Research Journal*. 555-588. doi: 10.22059/jflr.2017.239520.374
- Mortezaei, J. (2014). Az tavārod tā serqat-e adabi [From connotation to plagiarism]. *Literary Art*. 6(1), 61-70.
- Nushi, M. (2018). Barresi-e Siāsat-haye Serqat-e Adabi dar Tārnama-haye Dāneshgah-ha va Marākez-e Āmouzesh-e Āli-e Iran [Exploring Plagiarism Policy Statements on Iranian University and Higher Education Institute Websites]. *Journal of Management and Planning in Educational Systems*. 51-76.



- Plagiarism.org (2017, May 18). What is plagiarism? Retrieved April 1, 2019, from <https://www.plagiarism.org/article/what-is-plagiarism>
- Pournaghi, R. (2018). *Serqat-e elmi dar miyān-e danešjuyān-e dānešgāh-hā: Motāle'e-ye Morur-e Sistematic va metā-āanaliz* [Plagiarism among university students: Study of systematic review and meta-analysis]. <https://irandoc.ac.ir/research/958>
- Reshadatjoo, H., & Mohajeri, E. (2014). Ertebāt-e Bein-e Sedāqat-e Elmi va Pishraft-e Tahsili dar Dāneshjouyan-e Daneshgah-e Azad Vahed-e Oloum va Tahqiqat-e Tehran [Academic Honesty and Academic Achievement among the Students of Science and Research Branch of Islamic Azad University of Tehran, Iran]. *Journal of Management and Planning in Educational Systems*. 114-127.
- Sharifi Sahi, M., & Pourkhaleghi Chatroudi, M. (2011). Serqat-e adabi-ye Abd al-Wasi Djabali az divān-e Sanai [Abd al-Wasi Djabali's plagiarism from Sanai's Divan]. *Journal of Literary Studies*. 44(4), 85-106.
- Sotudeh, H., Rafi, N., & Mirzaei, Z. (2010). Negāhi be dastbord-e elmi va rāhkārā-ye pišgiri va peygi-ye ān [Review of plagiarism, its prevention, and follow-up strategies]. *Journal of Library and Information Science*. 13(4), 17-50.
- Winsett, R. P. (2017). The importance of self-plagiarism in publication. *Progress in Transplantation*, 27(4), 327-328. doi:10.1177/1526924817733856



Iranian Cultural Research

Abstract