

Assessment of faculty members' and students' awareness, attitude and performance about plagiarism at Hormozgan University of Medical Sciences**¹Soghra Fallahi, ²Abdolazim Nejatizadeh, ³Morteza Salimi, ¹Minoo Rajai, ³Afsoon Piroozan, ³Seyed Reza Mirsoleymani, ³Ali Akbar Hesam, ³Ahmad Hayhat, ³Naser Shekoohiyan, ³Sakine Fallahi, ³Sakine Shekoohiyan***¹Research Center for Reproductive Health & Infertility, Department of Research and Technology, Hormozgan University of Medical Sciences, Bandar-e-Abbas, Iran**²Department of Research and Technology, Hormozgan University of Medical Sciences, Bandar-e-Abbas, Iran**³Student Research Committee, Department of Research and Technology, Hormozgan University of Medical*

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ABSTRACT

Plagiarism is stealing others' ideas, methods, results or written works as well as using another's production without crediting the source. This study intends to assess the pre faculty and faculty members' awareness, attitude and performance about plagiarism in their writings or findings at Hormozgan University of Medical sciences (HUMS). In this regard, a questionnaire containing 12 questions was designed to assess the awareness, attitude and performance of 65 faculty members and 80 pre faculty of HUMS. The findings from the faculty members' questionnaire analysis were statistically different from that of the pre faculty members', regarding the use of a quotation mark when referring to others' statements, original articles, websites and books, applying one's teacher's or peer's comments under their own name, using photos or images taken from previously written articles by the same author ($P < 0.5$). The results indicated that the faculty members had a better awareness, attitude and performance toward following the principles of plagiarism as they carry out researches more often. To overcome the weak points in this regard, it is essential to hold up educational workshops for the pre faculty as well as the faculty members to promote their awareness, attitude and performance toward plagiarism.

Key words: awareness, attitude, performance, plagiarism**Introduction**

The word plagiarism was first raised by Marcus Valerius In 1993 [6], an article was published in a German journal the most parts of which were found by the by the editors to have been taken from two journals: BMJ (1989) and New England Med (1992). The author of the article was asked to present his data. His other articles were investigated as well. Once the subject was demonstrated, the author was dismissed from work [7]. This is an instance of plagiarism which is considered a serious infringement and would be followed by unpleasant consequences. Although it would be difficult to define plagiarism in a sentence, but on the whole it should be stated as stealing others' ideas, methods, results or written works without mentioning the reference, whether intentionally or unintentionally [11,12]. Moreover, self-plagiarism would be worth considering in academic levels as authors reapply

their own previous works without making any changes or even crediting the source [10]. Besides, reapplying photos or images without mentioning the reference is considered plagiarism as well. Easy access to vast sources of information on the net has grown the youngsters' tendency for copying data without citing the reference [11]. Concerns in these regards among international communities have resulted in establishing guidelines issued by the Committee of Ethics in Research [7]. Editorial boards of journals use a software program to determine plagiarism. Parts of the article which seem suspicious are compared with the original one. Comparing the abstract of an article with the original one would be helpful to specify plagiarism.

Prevalence of plagiarism in academic degrees depends on the cultural characteristics. There are different attitudes to plagiarism in different societies [3]. Among students this matter haven't considered seriously due to lack of knowledge about plagiarism.

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Based on study about the prevalence of plagiarism among medical students reported committing plagiarism by 91% of the subjects [1,4]. Therefore, the best proposed method for preventing plagiarism is to educate students about importance of honesty in science and professional work [8].

The aim of this research was to determine assess pre faculty and faculty members' awareness, attitude and performance about plagiarism in their writings or findings at Hormozgan University of Medical sciences (HUMS).

Methods:

This was a cross-sectional study conducted on 65 pre faculty and 80 faculty members of HUMS as Census technique, in order to assess their awareness, attitude and performance regarding plagiarism. Faculty members and students at different levels including basic sciences and clinical medical sciences were chosen from schools of Medicine, Health, Nursing and Para medicine. This popularity are pretty unified, otherwise HUMS faculty member divided almost into the same number. The participants were given a questionnaire containing 12 questions and after having been filled out, the questionnaire was adapted with the original questionnaire answer key. The questionnaire has been extracted from related article and then adopted with mentioned popularity, whereupon validity and reliability approved by experts ($\alpha = 0.85$). SPSS version 16 (SPSS Inc, Chicago Illinois, U.S.A.) were used for statistical analysis. Frequency distribution and Chi-square tests also were used to analyze the data.

Results:

There were 145 participants on the whole including 80 pre faculty (55.2%) and 65 faculty members (44.8%) of which 55.9% was male and 44.1% female. Table 1 indicates that 41 faculty members (63.1%) and 22 students (27.5%) from the total population use a quotation mark when a sentence is copied from someone else. 48 faculty members (73.8%) and 35 pre faculty (43.8%) emphasized that the reference must be cited when a sentence is taken and translated from another article. Regarding copying some contents from a website, a book or an article, 47 faculty members (72.3%) and 29 pre faculty (36.3%) agree that the source must be mentioned. Most of the faculty members and the pre faculty are not well informed about reference citation of a reapplied image. Only 14 faculty members (21.5%) and 6 pre faculty (7.5%) were aware of this issue. 42 faculty members (64.6%) and 32 pre faculty (40%) believe that taking teachers' or friends' ideas would be considered plagiarism. 15 faculty members (23.1%) and 18 pre faculty (22.5%) strongly disagree with making a new content out of putting several

paragraphs together. Moreover, 21 faculty members (32.3%) and 30 pre faculty (37.5%) had a negative attitude toward changing one or two words from a sentence to make a new one and not citing the reference. 44 faculty members (67.7%) and 26 pre faculty (32.5%) strongly disagree with rewriting a sentence from an article under their own name. 46 faculty members (70.8%) and 33 pre faculty (41.3%) do not agree to submit someone else's work under their own name. Not mentioning the reference website is considered plagiarism by 41 faculty members (63.1%) and 16 pre faculty (41.3%). 17 faculty members (26.2%) and 17 pre faculty (21.3%) strongly disagree with the issue to use one's own previously published sentence, ignoring the source. 13 faculty members (20 %) and 8 pre faculty (10%) believe that reapplying images or photos from previously published works would be considered plagiarism. The difference between the faculty members' awareness compared with the pre faculties' were statistically significant about using a quotation mark when someone else's sentence is copied, citing the reference when a sentence is taken and translated from another article, or some content is taken from a website, a book or others' articles ($P < 0.05$).

Yet, they are not informed enough about reference citation of a reapplied image or photo. The difference between the faculty members' attitude and the pre faculties' were statistically significant ($P = 0.005$) about taking someone's teachers' or friends' ideas. However, comparing the attitude of the two groups of participants regarding copying some paragraphs and making a new one out of putting them together or changing one or two words to make a new sentence was not significantly different ($P = 0.229$) and ($P = 0.06$). The faculty members' performance was significantly different from that of the pre faculties in the fields of registering one's sentence or article under their own name, citing the website or reapplying photos and images from previously published works which indicates that the faculty members have an acceptable performance toward plagiarism ($P < 0.05$). However, they wouldn't consider it wrong to reapply sentences from their own previously published works without citing the reference ($P = 0.202$).

Discussion:

The present study which intended to assess the awareness, attitude and performance of the faculty members and the pre faculty members 'at HUMS regarding plagiarism, indicated that there are still deficiencies in some aspects of plagiarism. This study showed faculty members have better status compared with pre faculty about plagiarism. But two groups didn't have sufficient information about self-plagiarism. This lack of information improved by workshop about plagiarism.

In 2009, Razera et al conducted a study comparing the results of a previous study carried out in 2005 at the department of Computer and Systems Sciences (DSV) at Stockholm University (SU) in Sweden with their findings about the pre faculty members and the faculty members' awareness, attitude and performance regarding plagiarism. This study was carried out on 24 faculty members and 47 higher education students who were emailed a questionnaire. The results indicated that the faculty members had promoted their awareness and attitude compared with the year 2005 due to taking part in training courses for this matter [9]. A study conducted by Shirazi et al in 2010 at the University of Karachi on the Medical students and faculty members revealed the lack of information about plagiarism which would be due to deficiencies in the educational system. This study also indicated that many people commit plagiarism unintentionally. In this sense, it sounds essential to have institutions

which instruct the principles and rules along with organizing consistent training courses to avoid plagiarism. On the other hand, not only training in this field would be necessary, but also assessment centers and committees are needed to evaluate research projects and act seriously and decisively in case of such problems [11]. Comas-Forgas et al carried out a study on 560 Spanish undergraduate students in 2010. The result showed the main cause for plagiarism in academic essays is accessibility to Internet [2]. Pupovac et al showed attitudes towards plagiarism among students influenced by cultural environment. They said, students know plagiarism is form of dishonesty, but they do it. Also students believe that plagiarism in their noted will not be detected by tutors. According to the study that conducted on academic misconduct in Croatia showed Senior students tend to plagiarised more than junior students [5].

Table 1: Correct answer about plagiarism of faculty members and students

Questions	Faculty Members	Students	Sig.
1. When a sentence is reapplied from an article written by someone else, a quotation mark must be used.	41 (63.1%)	22 (27.5%)	< 0.001
2. When a sentence is taken and translated from an article, the reference must be cited.	48 (73.8%)	35 (43.8%)	0.001
3. When a paragraph is copied from a book, website or an article, the reference must be cited.	47 (72.3%)	29 (36.3%)	< 0.001
4. When an image is used to help complete the contents, it is necessary to know where it is taken from.	14 (21.5%)	6 (7.5%)	< 0.001
5. What do you think of applying your teacher's or friends' ideas in your article?	42 (64.6%)	32 (40%)	0.005
6. What do you think of copying a number of paragraphs from other articles and reapply them using a new one?	15 (23.1%)	18 (22.5%)	0.299
7. What do you think of changing one or two words from a sentence and not referring to the source?	21 (32.3%)	30 (37.5%)	0.06
8. What do you think of copying a sentence from an article or a journal under your own name?	44 (67.7%)	26 (32.5%)	< 0.001
9. What do you think of submitting an article written by your friend under your name?	46 (70.8%)	33 (41.3%)	< 0.001
10. What do you think of using contents taken from internet and publish them under your name?	41 (63.1%)	16 (20%)	< 0.001
11. What do you think of reapplying sentences from your previously published articles without mentioning the source?	17 (26.2%)	17 (21.3%)	0.202
12. What do you think of reapplying photos or images from your previously published articles without mentioning the source?	13 (20%)	8 (10%)	0.027

Conclusion:

According to the results, it is concluded that the faculty members have better awareness, attitude and performance about plagiarism as they are more involved with doing research. Due to lack of information in some dimensions, training courses are necessary both for the faculty members and the faculty member to improve their awareness, attitude and performance about plagiarism. Considering that the faculty members are mostly busy, it is recommended that they be given questionnaires via email so they can access and response the questions at any time. Moreover, taking part in educational workshops along with periodic trainings in this regard would be helpful.

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