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Editorial

Plagiarism vs Similarity Index: A Critical Insight

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The word Plagiarism is derived from the Latin term "*plagiarius*", meaning "kidnapper" [1]. Plagiarism severely violates publication ethics and professional conduct [2]. It may be defined as an unethical intentional or unintentional piracy of someone else idea/s or text without acknowledgement [1]. Intentional Plagiarism usually occurs when some educational credentials, professional promotions, or economic benefits might benefit the concerned author(s)—unintentional plagiarism results either from negligence or lack of awareness about plagiarism [3].

The first incidence of plagiarism was detected in the year 1979 in a scientific paper. A later number of papers were found to be plagiarised [4]. A report published in 2018 showed an increased number of retractions of scientific papers in the last two decades due to plagiarism [5]. The primary reason for the increase in plagiarism by the scientific community could be a mandatory requirement to publish for employment and promotions. In addition, lack of skill in scientific writing and stringent policies related to plagiarism [4]. The availability of advanced text formatting tools and free access to scientific information may also reason for increased cases of plagiarism [6].

In the early days, plagiarism detection was challenging for the publisher due to the unavailability of sophisticated screening technology for reviewing manuscripts against published hard copies of the articles. Advanced tools for detecting plagiarism, such as **iThenticate (Crossref), Turnitin, Grammarly,** and **Dupli Checker**, are available to compare manuscripts with published articles [3,4]. Recently, iParadigms has developed a plagiarism detection tool for individual authors to screen individual manuscripts against an extensive live database of scholarly literature [7].

Although instances of Plagiarism in scholarly article manuscript can easily be detected using such tools, they are limited to detecting text plagiarism, and thus Plagiarism of ideas remain undetected. In other words, these tools can detect similarities in the text and fail to detect actual plagiarism [4]. Accessibility to parts of published literature during its copyright period could be another limitation for tools to detection of Plagiarism [8]. In addition, certain commercial agencies unethically develop clones of published literature and indulge authors in manipulation [8]. Detection of Plagiarism may also encourage Smart Plagiarism [7]. Non-affordability of these high-cost subscription-based services could be another hurdle for researchers [5]. It is also challenging to detect similarity and Plagiarism in articles resubmitted for publication in other languages. Similarity in the articles with deliberate errors in text, and structure may also be difficult to detect [5]. Thus, the similarity screening tools need to be upgraded by providing more access to subscription-based publications [8].

The term 'Similarity Index' refers to the extent of overlap or matching between the submitted manuscript and already published scientific work [5]. The percentage of the similarity index is regarded as a standard measure against plagiarism [9]. Although many authors write their manuscripts for scientific publication honestly, however, depending on the number of words from the methodology section and quotations may contribute significantly to the similarity index. This may result in the rejection of a manuscript by the publisher even though the entire scientific content is novel and genuine [10].

Some research work may share the same research background, and thus text similarity between the separate papers may observe [7]. Notably, some well-known procedures or quotations cannot be changed but unintentionally end up with increased similarity [10]. The methodology adopted remains the same for specific studies and thus ends up with increased similarity [10]. One can avoid similarity

in scholarly articles by using quotation marks for verbatim copying and giving due credit to original contributor(s) at appropriate places [3].

In conclusion, Plagiarism detection tools aid in detecting textual similarity, which shall not be considered an alternative for the pear review process. Authors have put in sincere efforts to improve their ethical writing skills. The original contributor/author deserves due acknowledgement. Research organisations and professional institutes must provide the necessary facilities and encourage researchers to publish scholarly articles with original ideas and content. Similarly, a publisher should not judge the manuscripts solely based on the similarity index; due consideration shall also be given to the uniqueness and novelty of the work.

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