Similarity, Plagiarism, and Academic Citation

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Differentiating between "plagiarism" and "similarity" is crucial for academics. Similarities to other intellectual properties do not necessarily mean these are plagiarized. It simply means that the respective contents seem to be like the other intellectual contributions or previously published works of the same author(s). Whether the paper is plagiarized or not depends on whether it is appropriately cited or not. But even if it is appropriately cited, if the percentage of similarity of a paper exceeds the institution's accepted margin, the paper falls under ethical concern and thus would be treated as plagiarized. Such an instance, however, does not invite disciplinary action but, of course, rejection. On the other hand, intentional or reckless plagiarism is subject to being treated as a disciplinary offense. The purpose of this article is to inform academics, researchers, and graduate students of the importance of appropriate citation in academic writing. The discussion of this article includes plagiarism vs. similarity, academic citation, no or less similarity does not provide any guarantee of "no plagiarism," and how to avoid plagiarism and ensure appropriate academic citation. **Keywords:** Academic citation, APA style, in-text citations, plagiarism, similarity.

INTRODUCTION

Whether the paper is plagiarized or not does not necessarily depend on similarity; rather, it depends on whether it is appropriately cited or not. Nonetheless, even with proper citation, work may still be considered plagiarized if its similarity percentage exceeds the allowed margin set by the institution. It happens simply because it raises ethical concerns about paper. In such a case, refusal is the appropriate response rather than disciplinary action. Conversely, combating deliberate plagiarism is a subject to be dealt with under disciplinary procedure. What about unintended or inadvertent plagiarism, then? In such instances, academic supervisors must warn the researchers under their supervision. But rationally, it makes no sense to refer this to the institution's disciplinary or ethics committee.

The article then delves into the research method of the study, conceptual understanding of academic citation, plagiarism vs. similarity, and no or less similarity to raise awareness among academics, researchers, and graduate students on the significance of proper citation in academic writing. After that, following emphasis on ensuring proper academic citation and in-text citations with APA style, referencing resources to frame reference lists with APA style, and avoiding plagiarism, the study concludes with the final tune.

RESEARCH METHOD

The synthesis methods for qualitative research tailor a variety of unique approaches, i.e., meta-ethnography, grounded theory, thematic synthesis, textual narrative synthesis, meta-synthesis, meta-narrative, critical interpretive synthesis, focused synthesis, ecological triangulation, framework synthesis, and "fledgling" techniques (Talukdar et al., 2022).

The current round of synthesis research follows a convenient-focused synthesis method under the qualitative methodology. This focused synthesis signifies gathering and recording information and data from several focused sources, such as published and unpublished documents (Talukdar, 2012 & 2020) and internal seminar feedback from academic stakeholders on the relevant topic presented at the business school of American International University-Bangladesh in 2021 (Talukdar, 2021).

CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING

University academics are required to concentrate on producing and disseminating knowledge, but this does not imply that they will stop teaching. Rather, teaching is the methodical process of imparting knowledge and developing the human capital of the next generation. Scholars must have a reasonable chance of disseminating their knowledge, both in the classroom and outside the classroom. They must make their institutions known in the global knowledge domains, national policy realms, international policy and theoretical debates. For which they must connect the dots and build research collaborations and global partnerships. Undoubtedly, producing knowledge necessitates study, research, and the ability to write academically. And central to academic writing is a conceptual understanding of issues like academic citation, plagiarism vs. similarity, and no or less similarity.

Academic Citation

According to the University of Pittsburgh (2023, para.3), "a citation is a way of giving credit to individuals for their creative and intellectual works that you utilized to support your research." It is a tool for locating references and preventing plagiarism (ibid., 2023). Using online citation managers is a practical approach to keeping track conveniently of all the references provided. Mendeley, EndNote, and Zotero are among the programs that can be used by operating online citation managers with the resources of the University Library System (University of Pittsburgh, 2023a). There are four different schools of thought on academic citation: APA, Chicago/Turabian, MLA, and IEEE styles (ibid., 2023). The Turabian style is just an informal version of the Chicago style.

Plagiarism vs. Similarity

Presenting someone else's ideas or works as one's own, with or without the original author(s)' permission, by incorporating them into one's own work without giving due credit is known as plagiarism. This term encompasses all material, published or unpublished, in manuscript, printed, or electronic format. Plagiarism includes works produced entirely or partially via the use of artificial intelligence. Reusing one's own work without citation is another form of plagiarism. Plagiarism that is done intentionally as well as recklessly is a punishable offense (University of Oxford, 2024). "Plagiarism, specifically, is a term used to describe a practice that involves knowingly taking and using another person's work and claiming it, directly or indirectly, as your own" (Neville, 2007, p.28). In a nutshell, it is nothing but stealing intellectual property. Notably, plagiarism is an ethical dilemma that, depending on the circumstances,

context, and intent, may also be a case-sensitive legal matter. The extent and type of plagiarism help determine the offense's severity and the rationale for disciplinary action.

Similarity refers to likeness that implies the literature, content, thought, or contributions of a paper or write-up are merely somewhat alike. The state of the literature or the contributory facts of a write-up seem to be identical to a previous write-up of the same author or some others' contributions. Example: There is some similarity between the two write-ups. Well-applied tools to check similarity include Turnitin Similarity Checker, Moss: Measure of Software Similarity, Noplag 2014, Plagiarism Checker X 2021, etc.

Differentiating between "plagiarism" and "similarity" is crucial for academics. Similarities to other intellectual properties do not necessarily mean the paper is plagiarized. It simply means that the respective contents seem to be like the other intellectual contributions or author(s)' previously published works. Whether the paper is plagiarized or not depends on whether it is appropriately cited or not. But even if it is appropriately cited, if the percentage of similarity of a paper exceeds the institution's accepted margin, the paper falls under ethical concern and thus would be treated as plagiarized. Such an instance, however, does not invite disciplinary action but, of course, rejection. According to Turnitin (n.d., para.3), "similarity reports provide a summary of matching or highly similar text found in a submitted paper. When a similarity report is available for viewing, a similarity score percentage will be made available" (see figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1. A sample similarity report score

Source: Turnitin, n.d., Figure 1

Figure 2. A sample of different similarity reports' scores

Source: Turnitin, n.d., Figure 2

No or Less Similarity

Commonly asked questions regarding similarity include: Is 30% similarity on Turnitin marked as bad? What is the acceptable similarity percentage on Turnitin? I scored 0% similarity on Turnitin. Does it mean "zero plagiarism" or

what does it mean? Different institutions have different thresholds for acceptable rates of similarity. In the case of American International University-Bangladesh (AIUB), for example, an acceptable similarity rate is 20% for an academic write-up. And no or less similarity does not provide any guarantee of "no plagiarism."

Case 1. A real-world case: "My Ph.D. thesis got 5% similarity on Turnitin, but the supervisor still suggested carefully revisiting the paper if any unintended plagiarism would have been marked" (Talukdar, 2021, p.14). Case 2. A scenario-building exercise: Assume a situation where a reviewer, concerned professor, or supervisor asks an author or scholar to revisit some part or the whole paper to avoid unintended plagiarism because it seems to be plagiarized since the author didn't cite some materials appropriately, even those robustly synthesized or paraphrased. What should be the author's response in this case? The author should re-check the paper carefully to ensure zero plagiarism. For a university faculty member, both intended plagiarism and unintended plagiarism seem to be serious concerns.

Recommendation: "Accepting a paper based solely on Turnitin's or others' similarity percentage is inappropriate" (Talukdar, 2021, p.16). Explanation 1: There are several sorts of plagiarism. Turnitin or other similarity check softwires mostly find out word-for-word similarity and to what extent they copied someone's words. It also allows checking broadly citation standards and whether the matching/similarity overview crosses the institution's acceptable level. Explanation 2: One may plagiarize intentionally or unintentionally. If someone paraphrases a scholar's published or academically disseminated idea without appropriate citation, that seems to be silent plagiarism. Thus, a similarity report could also be false-positive. So, it is the professor's or reviewer's responsibility to read the whole paper carefully before accepting it as having no plagiarism. That is why a reviewer is supposed to be a subject-matter expert and academically sound.

IMPORTANCE OF CITATION

Although academic good practice is a broad issue, the key is to ensure academic integrity in writing through appropriate citation and referencing correctly and by means of avoiding intended and unintended plagiarism.

In academic writing, proper citation has four distinct implications: i) In order to demonstrate to the reader that appropriate research is done, the sources used to gather information should be listed; ii) The author can make it easier for readers to locate the sources consulted by accurately citing them in the paper through the use of footnotes, a bibliography, or a reference list; iii) One can be a responsible scholar by acknowledging the work of others and providing credit for their ideas; iv) The author can prevent plagiarism by citing other writers' words and ideas (MIT Libraries, 2024).

ENSURING APPROPRIATE CITATION

Citations are made up of standard components that include the author's name(s), the titles of books or articles, journals, the date of publication, and page, volume, and issue numbers (for articles). Depending on what is being cited and the style used to construct it, citations might have varied appearances (ibid., 2024).

The citation style options vary throughout academic disciplines and institutions. For example, education, psychology, and the sciences (both social and natural sciences) all make use of the APA (American Psychological Association) style; the humanities use the MLA (Modern Language Association) style. History and the fine arts employ the Chicago/Turabian style, and in engineering, mainly in Electronic and Electrical Engineering and Computer Science,

the IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers) style is often used. Business prefers both the Chicago and the APA styles.

No matter the style, the following needs to be cited: Ideas, facts, numbers, or other information not widely known; Concepts, terminology, hypotheses, or precise wording that has been utilized by someone else in other works. Publication references are required for citations of relevant published properties such as books, articles, theses, web pages, and book chapters. Quoting and citing someone else's exact words is permissible, giving them proper credit (MIT Libraries, 2024).

When words, concepts, figures, images, or other materials are borrowed from another source and used in the new work, they must be briefly cited in the body of the text, next to the copied properties, known as the in-text citation. To prevent self-plagiarism while reusing one's own work, the in-text citation practice must also be applied. It is noteworthy that all in-text citations must be followed by a detailed referencing list at the end of the paper. Even with the right citations, it is imperative to reuse the material with sufficient paraphrasing. In some instances, the author can use important as well as exact phrasing with less than 40 words with a quote and an unquote. For reusing a long exact phrasing with 40 words or more, the author must use a block quotation with a parenthetical citation or narrative citation approach.

IN-TEXT CITATIONS WITH APA STYLE

In-text citations may look different, depending on what is being cited, and which style is used to create them. The common in-text citation patterns of APA style that are generally used in education, psychology, social sciences and sciences, and business studies are presented below as an example. It follows the author-date method for in-text citations. Both paraphrases and direct quotes require citations. All facts, figures, and tables that are used—except common knowledge—must cite sources. Neither under-citation nor over-citation is appreciated.

Use the author's last name and date of publication for paraphrases. Examples:

Talukdar (2018), Khan (2018, 2020), and Zerina and Rahman (2019) were examined. . .

(Rahman et al., 2020; Talukdar, 2022; Zerina and Rahman, 2019).

(Talukdar et al., 2019).

(Zerina and Rahman, 2020; see also Abrar et al., 2018; Luz, 2014; Talukdar, 2017).

(American International University-Bangladesh, n.d., 2017a, 2017b, 2019).

Cite primary sources when possible and cite secondary sources sparingly. Examples:

(Talukdar, 2023, as cited in Rahman et al., 2015).

When the primary source date is unknown:

BRAC University (as cited in Abrar, 2007) or Khan (as cited in Nelson, 2009).

Tables, Figures, and Image sources (below the property):

Source: Khan, 2010, p. 3. Or *Source: Khan, 2010, p. 3.*

Source: American International University-Bangladesh, 2023, Table 3. Or *Source: BRAC University, 2023, Figure 4.*

When paraphrasing or quoting, the author may credit a specific section of the source; nevertheless, this section of the source should not be cited in the reference list. Citing a specific passage from a source is required when explicitly quoting, but it is optional when paraphrasing. However, it's imperative to keep citations consistent and unique across the entire document. It means that if the author cites a specific part of a source in the case of paraphrasing, he or she is supposed to follow this style for the whole work.

Examples of citing a specific part of a source:

Part	Example
Page	(Stoddard et al., 2020, p. 47)
Page range	(World Health Organization, 2019, pp. 202–205)
Chapter	(Merenda, 2018, Chapter 14)
Paragraph	(Liu et al., 2020, para. 3)
Paragraph range	(Bassie & Meagher, 2020, paras. 4–5)
Footnote	(Garcia et al., 2020, Footnote 2)
Table	(National Institute of Mental Health, 2019, Table 3)
Figure	(Lazer, 2020, Figure 4)
Time stamp in an audiovisual work	(Patel & Gupta, 2019, 1:09:19)
Chapter and verse in a religious work	(*The Torah*, 1962/2015, Exodus 1:1–6:1)
Content ID or page ID from an academic research database	(Svendsen & Løber, 2020, c373)

Figure 3. Citing a specific part of a source

Source: American Psychological Association,2019

Suggested modality of in-text citations for paraphrasing and explicitly quoting, as shown in table 1 below.

Table 1. Simple way of in-text citations: paraphrasing and quoting.

Examples for paraphrases	**Examples of quotes**
(Talukdar, 2018). According to Talukdar (2018), … Talukdar (2018) points out that… Talukdar (2018) opines that… Research reveals that… (Talukdar, 2018).	"……………" (Talukdar, 2018, p. 33). "……………" (Talukdar, 2018:33). According to Talukdar, "… "(2018, p. 33). According to Talukdar (2018:33), "…"

Direct quotes follow parenthetical citations or narrative citations with original sources, as shown in tables 2 and 3 below.

Table 2. Citations for short quotations.

Quotations (Less than 40 words)	What is an effective team? It can be difficult to describe because "high performance along one domain does not translate to high performance along another" (Ervin et al., 2018, p. 470).

Source: Adapted from American Psychological Association, 2019a

Table 3. Citations for long quotations.

	Block quotation (parenthetical citation)
Quotations (40 words or more)	Researchers have studied how people talk to themselves: Inner speech is a paradoxical phenomenon. It is an experience that is central to many people's everyday lives, and yet it presents considerable challenges to any effort to study it scientifically. Nevertheless, a wide range of methodologies and approaches have combined to shed light on the subjective experience of inner speech and its cognitive and neural underpinnings. (Alderson-Day & Fernyhough, 2015, p. 957)
	Block quotation (narrative citation)
	Flores et al. (2018) described how they addressed potential researcher bias when working with an intersectional community of transgender people of color: Everyone on the research team belonged to a stigmatized group but also held privileged identities. Throughout the research process we attended to the ways in which our privileged and oppressed identities may have influenced the research process, findings, and presentation of results. (p. 311)

Source: Adapted from American Psychological Association, 2019a

The formats for citing personal communications and when there is no date are indicated in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Citing personal communications and no date.

Citing personal communications	Citation when there is no date
Narrative citation: E.-M. Paradis (personal communication, August 8, 2019) Parenthetical citation: (T. Nguyen, personal communication, February 24, 2020) Traditional Knowledge or Oral Histories: We spoke with Anna Grant (Haida Nation, lives in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, personal communication, April 2019) about traditional understandings of the world by First Nations Peoples in Canada. She described. …. Or We spoke with Kamla Basin (who lives in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada; personal communication, April 2021) about traditional understandings of the world. She described…	World Bank. (n.d.). Defining corruption…… https://…. International Journal of Indigenous Health. (n.d.). *Defining Aboriginal Peoples within Canada*. https://journals.uvic.ca/journalinfo/ijih/IJIHDefiningIndigenousPeoplesWithinCanada.pdf

Source: Adapted from American Psychological Association, 2019b

REFERENCE LIST WITH APA STYLE

A separate publication is necessary to discuss the reference list, as it is outside the purview of this study. Nevertheless, noteworthy is the fact that sufficient resources, guidelines, examples, and explanations are available in this regard from Purdue OWL (see Purdue University, 2024), Edgewood College (see Oscar Rennebohm Library Edgewood College, 2024), Simmons University (see Simmons University Library, 2023), and the American Psychological

Association (see American Psychological Association, 2019c).

AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

"Plagiarism—whether intentional or unintentional—must be avoided at all costs" (Charlesworth Author Services, 2021: para 2). The difference between intentional and unintentional plagiarism and how to overcome the risk of both is documented in tables 5 and 6 below.

Table 5. Intentional and unintentional plagiarism.

Intentional plagiarism	Unintentional plagiarism
The following are examples of intentional plagiarism: Reusing one's own published concepts and phrases without proper citation. Republishing the same paper under a different title without considering copyright infringement and appropriate acknowledgement. Having an entire or part of someone else's paper copied and claimed as one's own property. Stealing an idea, concept, or a few words that make up a sentence or sense in one's own work without giving credit to the original author.	Unintentional plagiarism can be defined as the following: Inadvertently using the wrong source or failing to properly credit sources. Unintentionally using an incorrect "source" because the information was gathered from dubious secondary literature or the internet, leading to such a kind of error. Inappropriately paraphrasing or failing to properly cite paraphrased information, contents, concepts, or ideas due to a lack of knowledge about citation.

Source: Adapted from Talukdar, 2021, pp. 19-20

Table 6. Overcoming the risk of intentional and unintentional plagiarism.

Avoiding intended plagiarism	Avoiding unintended plagiarism
Appropriate citation is a must-follow research rule to avoid intended plagiarism. According to Penn State (2012), one author must give proper credit to the source whenever the author uses words from another source, such as a Web site, book, journal article, or even a friend's paper. "Even if you don't use someone else's words, but you refer to an idea or concept from another source, you must also give credit" (ibid., 2012, p. 1). The same holds true for reusing one's own published concepts and phrases. One must consider copyright policy and acknowledgement for republishing the same paper.	Appropriately paraphrase, cite, and add your own ideas to advance the literature stream. Quote and unquote as appropriate with original sources, add your own ideas, and advance the literature stream. Properly document the table, figure, and graph sources. Use proper citation style for text, tables, figures, and images. Get the written consent of concerned copyright holders for the reuse of tables, figures, and images. Credit the original author appropriately with both in-text citations and detailed corresponding references. Cite both in-text and corresponding references correctly. Utilize high-quality similarity-checking tools or software prior to submitting to a journal, publisher, or competent authority. Verify that the percentage (%) of "matching/similarity overview" that the similarity report produces satisfies the requirements set out by the publisher, journal, or institution.

Source: Adapted from Talukdar, 2021, pp. 21-23

CONCLUSION

This academic write-up so far carefully examines the relationship between plagiarism and similarity, the penalties for plagiarism, and the significance of academic citations when dealing with plagiarism. To maintain academic

writing integrity, the paper also focuses on operationalizing proper citations with thorough in-text citations in APA style. Instead of analyzing reference list formatting, the article refers to the resources that are readily available and that provide instructions, examples, and clarifications in this realm.

Finally, in conclusion, the article points out the Charlesworth Author Services (2021) opinion regarding plagiarism and writing integrity: Using quote marks where necessary, properly documenting references, citing in-text and referring to the source, writing clearly and paraphrasing appropriately, writing in one's own voice (style), and consistently crediting the original source are some specific guidelines to avoid plagiarism. To prevent mixing up and confounding other people's work with the author's own, the writing and referencing must be organized, and the author's ideas, opinions, findings, and results must be kept apart from previously published ones. The author needs to thoroughly inspect all figures used and must be knowledgeable about copyright concerns and image reuse policies.

Glossary

APA style	APA stands for the American Psychological Association. It is a dominant citation style developed by the American Psychological Association, generally used in education, psychology, social sciences and sciences, and business studies. It holds a distinct style termed 'author-date' citation style both in in-text citations and in reference list citations.
Chicago style	The University of Chicago developed the 'Chicago' style of citation. History, fine arts, and business mostly employ the Chicago style. It follows either 'notes and bibliography' or 'author-date' citation style.
EndNote	It is a popular reference manager that allows one to save time on formatting citations.
et al.	It refers to et alia, et alii, or et aliae. This expression denotes 'and others.' It commonly indicates other contributors, such as cowriters, coeditors, etc.
ibid.	It refers to the previous reference and source in in-text citations.
In-text citations	It refers to citing the text. The sentence containing the referred content must be cited within, before, or after the text with the author's last name and year of publication.
Mendeley	It is reference management software.
Noplag 2014	It is one of the most trusted plagiarism detector programs.
Purdue OWL	Through its online and on-campus English writing labs, Purdue OWL, a resource platform of Purdue University, offers support to students, instructors, professionals, and organizations worldwide.
Turabian	It, a style of citation and formatting created by Kate Turbian, is adapted from the 'Chicago' style. It is most used in the arts and humanities and, to some extent, in the social sciences. It is also known as an informal or student-friendly version of the 'Chicago' style.
Turnitin	It is the most popular similarity-checking software.
Self-plagiarism	It refers to the practice of using one's own exact or paraphrased words or ideas from previously published works without giving due credit to the previous publication.
X 2021	It is a plagiarism-checking software, known as Plagiarism Checker X 2021.

Zotero	It is a professionally developed free artificial intelligence research assistant that helps one collect, organize, cite, and share research.

Abbreviations

AIUB   American International University Bangladesh

APA   American Psychological Association

IEEE   Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers

MIT   Massachusetts Institute of Technology

MLA   Modern Language Association

Moss   Measure of Software Similarity

n.d.   No Date

Ph.D.   Doctor of Philosophy

Declarations

Ethics approval

The paper follows all ethical standards of research.

Competing interest

No competing interests exist.

Consent for publication

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