

SELF-PLAGIARISM A MATTER OF ETHICS AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the issue of self-plagiarism in scientific research. What does self-plagiarism mean, what is the legal framework and in what context does it differ from double publication, paraphrasing, and compilation of ideas, texts, or papers? Self-plagiarism involves publishing/ reusing all or part of the same content, copy-paste from a text/texts, expressions, demonstrations, data, hypotheses, theories, results, or scientific methods extracted from written works, double publication, compilation, by the same author, regardless of the language of presentation/ publication, at a certain time interval without making it clear that it has been transmitted in the past and without referring to the original source(s). Self-plagiarism is also the use of close paraphrasing, without fully and correctly mentioning the original source of the text. Self-plagiarism is very clearly committed in a situation where an author, without citing the original source, partially or completely re-exploits his own work. This fact usually arises from the desire to multiply the list of works and implicitly the CV.

Keywords: Self-plagiarism; paraphrasing; double publication; compilation;

INTRODUCTION

Recently, in the Romanian scientific and academic environment, some controversies related to plagiarism have appeared. If plagiarism is a clearly regulated fact from a legal point of view and primarily expresses an intellectual fraud, the issue of plagiarism does not affect copyright, moreover, it is not very well defined in terms of extension or when it comes to the legislative framework. Self-plagiarism as it is known and publicized lately, especially with regard to the contestation of some Ph.D. theses of somewhat famous authors, is more a matter of academic ethics, a case related to the good practices that each author must respect and implement both in the intellectual approach and in scientific research.

1. SELF-PLAGIARISM CONCEPTUAL, ETHICAL AND LEGAL BOUNDARIES

First of all, it is necessary to specify what self-plagiarism is from a legal point of view. According to Article 4(1) (e) of Law. No 206/2004, self-plagiarism means: "the presentation in a written work or oral communication, including here those published in a digital format, of texts, expressions, demonstrations, data, hypotheses, theories, results or scientific methods extracted from written or digital works, by the same author or same authors, without mentioning this and without referring to the original sources".

The substantive analysis of the problem of self-plagiarism is primarily related to the ramifications and forms of self-plagiarism, double publication, compilation, paraphrasing. Here we must distinguish between what an author reuses, whether we are talking about a written work, a work communicated orally, or one in an electronic format, or we are discussing some texts, expressions, demonstrations, hypotheses, scientific methods that reflect the intellectual or creative work that involves copyright. It must follow the extent to which the author propagates his new research while at the same time appealing to some older content. First of all, this method of making one's own research available to a scientific community, to a wider audience, in order not to be considered self-plagiarism, must have explicitly mentioned the citation of the source of the work, text, image, etc. partially or completely taken over, where it was originally published or disseminated in an online/physical environment, within scientific conferences and events.

A rather complex aspect is represented, for example, by a work of art (painting, sculpture, etc.) which the author himself replicated until it reached the standardized form, which became public, known as original. Is this multi-copy work created by the author a form of self-plagiarism? Strictly formally, the answer may incline towards self-plagiarism, but given that each work can be considered original, to which the author's uniqueness contributes, the value in time and space, we consider that in such situations it cannot be self-plagiarism. Various researches in any scientific, technical, or innovation field can go in the same direction.

An author can make progress in scientific research by deepening the subject, starting either from what he has achieved or from what is achieved by others, reaching new conclusions presented in new works. Therefore, there is a steady and dynamic aspect of the research, but it is always necessary to specify, in the initial stage, the previously published studies on the basis of which the new research is developed. Any research, especially if we refer to experimental or technical ones, which involve a certain database from which it must start and advance in its dimensions of discovery and innovation, in fact from an older work of or an older material base, which retains the original content over which or from which new results have advanced, does not mean self-plagiarism. But here comes a new ethical issue, that of self-citations. "The Code of Ethics does not condemn the taking over of texts or fragments of one's own texts into new texts, provided that the destination or the public is changed and the public is notified that they are takeovers (Article 13). The reader must be informed, out of respect for his intellectual capacity. Excessive self-citation, as a technique to climb the rankings and to accumulate scores that allow the advancement in the academic career, is considered an abuse (article 14)" (Emanuel Socaciu, 2018, 119).

Self-plagiarism involves the publishing/ reusing all or part of the same content, copy-paste from a text/ texts, expressions, demonstrations, data, hypotheses, theories, scientific results or methods extracted from written works, double publication, compilation, by the same author, regardless of the language of presentation/ publication, at a certain time without making it clear that it was transmitted in the past and without referring to the original source (s). Self-plagiarism is also the use of close paraphrasing, without fully and correctly mentioning the original source of the text.

The double publication or publication in different volumes/ scientific journals of the same material/ article/ content at the same time or at a different time interval with a changed title or not, with an adapted text or not, written/ translated into a different language or in the same language represents- self-plagiarism.

All these researches/ articles/ studies/ publications used later in the CV or in the institutional requirements, those of professional training or those of career promotion specific to the socio-professional work environment, to each activity environment, or to a university environment, constitute self-plagiarism. They must be detected or reported as such because they represent a form of self-plagiarism. We make a very clear distinction that those works republished in their original form or republished and updated, improved with the strict specification of the original source, which are partially or fully republished do not constitute self-plagiarism.

Self-plagiarism is more about the ethics and deontology of scientific research, academic integrity than about the legal spectrum, because it does not infringe copyright, but unfairly brings more rights to the author. Therefore, in Romania, Law no. Article 2 (2) and Article 14, paragraphs 1-2, equates self-plagiarism with plagiarism, calling them "deviations from the rules of good conduct in scientific research, technological development and innovation". It should also be noted that legal norms differ from ethical norms not only by the way in which the acts of conformity with the system of norms are provided, but also by the clearer affirmation of the sanctions and of those entitled to apply them.

Another facet of self-plagiarism is the compilation or assembly of ideas, their recombination from different works or different previously published texts. Even if from a legal point of view, *strito sensu* the author does not fit into what law 206/2004 defines as self-plagiarism, we must keep in mind that by reusing some ideas the author who makes a selection of them and publishes them in a new study violates Article 5, letter a, from Law no. 319/2003, regarding the status of the staff involved in research and development activities.

In view of the above, it is imperative to remember that any work published and partially or fully republished must be used and exploited by the author in terms of his rights and socio-professional, institutional evaluation, career promotion only once. This is another differentiation of a republished/ updated work/ text from what is meant by self-plagiarism.

Although in fact and in law the detection of self-plagiarism and the use of copyright in all specific forms is very difficult to achieve. In the Romanian university environment, at the level of each academic institution that implies autonomy, but also at the level of central bodies, we refer to the National Council for the Attestation of University Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates (CNATDCU), several norms and standards of integrity have been drawn up over time. and standards of integrity and academic ethics. Thus, each university institution uses and implements a Charter of Ethics and Academic Integrity.

It is also noteworthy, especially in the field humanities and social sciences, the presence of several authors who gather in volumes, collections or anthologies, scientific studies published over time, to make them as well known as possible, expressly stating that they have been previously published, or represent improved reprints. In view of these express clarifications, we consider that in this case, it cannot be a question of self-plagiarism, but from the point of view of any additional score with socio-professional benefits, it must be awarded only once, of course at the most favorable indicator for the author. In terms of copyright, money or notoriety, any self-replication has continuous effects over time.

Self-plagiarism is very clearly committed in the situation where an author, without citing the original source, partially or completely re-exploits his own work, this fact being usually triggered by the desire to multiply the list of works and implicitly the CV.

2. SHORT ANALYSIS OF PUBLICATION RULES AND ETHICS - IFIASA ¹

We present an analysis of the rules of publication implemented by IFIASA- Ideas Forum International Academic and Scientific Association, rules which we agreed upon, precisely to exclude plagiarism and self-plagiarism, rules characterized by the fact that mainly original scientific studies that have not been published previously are accepted.

Among the editorial priorities, it is stated that IFIASA journals and papers are open access resources, which means that the research are made available to all, they can be used directly by those interested in noticing some similarities of the disseminated ideas. "The submitted manuscripts are evaluated for scientific content, on an equal footing for all authors. All papers received are reviewed and evaluated by the Editorial Board and subsequently undergo a double review process. The Editorial Board encourages the publication of scientific articles provided that the ethical values of scientific research are respected" (<https://ifiasa.org/gallery/ifiasa-publicationethics-publicationmalpracticestatement.pdf>).

The publication rules for authors state that: "Submission of a paper for publication in one of the IFIASA Journals implies that the paper has never been published or is not being evaluated by another publisher. Authors are invited to submit original and previously unpublished works.

The authors' responsibilities include:

- that the manuscripts are their original work.
- that the manuscript has not been previously published elsewhere.
- that the manuscript is not currently being considered for publication elsewhere.
- all the authors mentioned must have contributed significantly to the research.
- that all the data in the paper are real and authentic.
- authors must inform publishers of any conflicts of interest.
- authors must identify all sources used in creating the manuscript.

Regarding plagiarism, IFIASA considers that taking over the ideas and work of others without quoting them is a theft, an unjust act, a crime. Plagiarism and self-plagiarism are unacceptable.

From the analysis of the publication rules imposed by this international publisher, it is very clear that he accepts and publishes articles, original studies that respect the rights of those who created them by quoting them correctly. This fact is quite well known and important especially because the quotations related to a work are a criterion for evaluating its quality, the scientific and academic value of the author (s), but also the scientific journal or book in which it was published.

3. CONCLUSIONS. COMBATING SELF-PLAGIARISM – SOLUTIONS

The main cause of self-plagiarism, which some authors resort to, is the lack of awareness and fair play in academic research; good information and motivation are needed in terms of assuming scientific standards.

As solutions to combat self-plagiarism we propose:

- inter-collaboration between universities, scientific research centers, editorial committees and the establishment of ethics guidelines applied at national and international level;

¹ <https://ifiasa.org/>

- inter-collaboration between publishers and a better evaluation of the texts proposed by the authors from the reviewers;

- checking of the work in national/ international plagiarism systems;
- the issuance of clear legislative norms from which to derive strict sanctions for acts of plagiarism or self-plagiarism simultaneously with the activity of working commissions in which activate honest specialists.

-open access to all works suspected of plagiarism or self-plagiarism.

Even if the plagiarism does not involve legal and sometimes not even ethical sanctions, as is often the case, due to the lack of evidence or ethical procedures, of working committees, of specialists involved in this fight regarding the maintenance research standards, at the level of academic personal or institutional prestige it seriously damages the status of those involved and constitute an intellectual deception.

In the absence of ethical and legal rules to incriminate self-plagiarism based on concrete examples, of national and international commissions composed of experts, often for reasons and respite in institutional, political or personal promotion, the media, out of a sheer desire to stir the waters and score some rating, became a powerful accuser and judge of both cases of plagiarism and self-plagiarism. This is not the solution, the media does not have the necessary competence, but educational and academic institutions must issue rules and implement and monitor research standards through commissions, forums and specialists.

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