

**KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDE OF MEDICAL STUDENTS REGARDING  
PLAGIARISM**Pooja Yadav<sup>1</sup> and Dr. Arti A. Kasulkar\*<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup>MBBS Student, Department of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology, NKP Salve Institute of Medical Sciences and Research Centre, Nagpur.<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology, NKP Salve Institute of Medical Sciences and Research Centre, Nagpur.**\*Corresponding Author: Dr. Arti A Kasulkar**

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**ABSTRACT**

Plagiarism is a form of dishonesty, illegitimate appropriation of intellectual property, ideas, methods, results, text, speech or thought for the purpose of displaying as its own. The present study was carried out in 100 medical students to assess the knowledge and attitude regarding plagiarism. We observed that most of the students displayed insufficient knowledge regarding plagiarism in terms of copying words or ideas, quoting references, copying words without changing the matter. We concluded that it is alarming pace and to eradicate the problem, orientation of medical students through lectures, seminars, and workshops is need of hour.

**KEYWORDS:** Plagiarism, Medical Students, Knowledge, Attitude, Questionnaire.**INTRODUCTION**

Integrity is fundamental value for scientists, especially for medical science which results have immediate impact on health. The term plagiarism is derived from the Latin word "plagiarius" meaning "kidnapping" or "plunderer", has been defined as the practice of using other's ideas and text claiming them as one's own original authorship without acknowledging the source. It refers to the unacknowledged use of other people's ideas or words and comprises the use of published or unpublished data in the original language or as a translation without crediting the author(s).<sup>[1]</sup> Despite the negative view of the scientific community towards plagiarism, statistics show that a considerable proportion of researchers commit plagiarism.<sup>[2]</sup> Among all the types of misconducts in science and in academic environment, plagiarism is considered to be the most vicious as it constitutes theft of intellectual property. These people may even claim they did not understand they were committing plagiarism, particularly when English is not their first language.<sup>[3]</sup> Though the concept of plagiarism seems to be very simple, researchers need to be familiar with its technical aspects. These days, the issue of plagiarism is of great concern.

Previously, journals, newspapers, magazines, were the sources for plagiarism. But due to easy access to a vast pool of electronic resources has become easy and within reach of anyone with a computer with internet access

worsening the already alarming situation among students.<sup>[4]</sup> The most common forms of plagiarism are copying and pasting passages, reproduction of tables and figures from previously published work, publish same data repeatedly, etc. Among researchers, students are the least experienced, and therefore, they are more likely to commit plagiarism unintentionally. Various reasons for indulging in plagiarism includes lack of knowledge about plagiarism, students' propensity towards such behaviour and not understanding the seriousness of such violations.

For this reason, this population has been studied by various authors in abroad.<sup>[5-8]</sup> though in India research in this area is very less. Recognising attitudes towards plagiarism is an important basis for educating and deterring students from plagiarizing. Keeping this in mind, the present study was carried out to assess the knowledge and attitude of medical students towards plagiarism.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

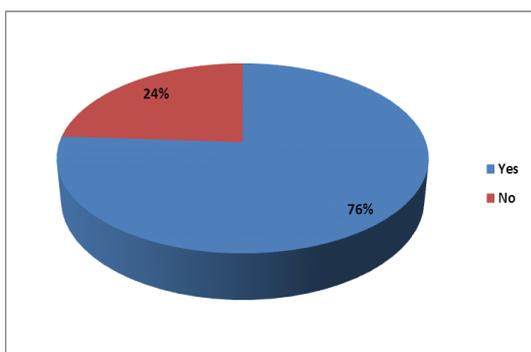
The present cross-sectional, questionnaire-based study was conducted at NKP Salve Institute of Medical Sciences & Research Centre, Nagpur from May 2016 to October 2016 after obtaining approval from Institutional Ethics Committee. The study population consisted of 100 MBBS students selected by universal sampling method. A questionnaire was designed by following prior study<sup>[9]</sup> to collect information regarding knowledge and attitude

towards plagiarism. Prior to administrating the questionnaire, the students were addressed regarding the purpose and process of data collection. They were informed that data collected would be anonymous and their participation would be voluntary. Questionnaires were distributed among the participants after taking their informed consent.

The questionnaire consists of three parts. The first part contains demographic data, second part contains knowledge factors of plagiarism and the third part contains attitude towards plagiarism. All questions were marked in a five point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree-1, disagree-2, neither agree nor disagree-3, agree-4, and strongly agree-5. The data was entered in the excel sheet, analysed and tabulated.

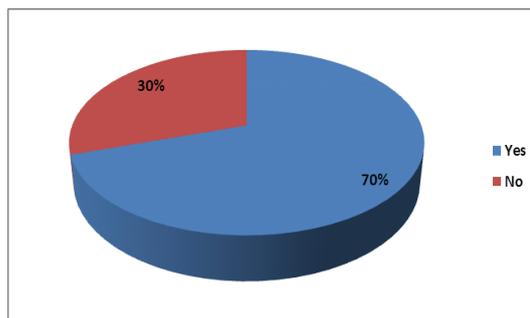
**RESULTS**

The present study was carried out to assess the knowledge and attitude of 100 MBBS students regarding plagiarism. We observed that most of the participants were aware about plagiarism (Fig. 1).



**Figure 1: Awareness of medical students about plagiarism.**

We found that most of the students had plagiarized to some extent in the past (Fig. 2).



**Figure 2: Distribution of plagiarism in medical students.**

We tested the knowledge and attitude of students using Likert’s scale and the results are depicted in Table 1 and 2. We observed that most of the students displayed insufficient knowledge regarding plagiarism in terms of copying words or ideas, quoting references, copying words without changing the matter (Table 1).

**Table 1: Knowledge of student about plagiarism.**

Sr. No.	Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	Turning in someone else’s work as your own is plagiarism	15	20	15	33	17
2	Copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit is plagiarism	25	35	6	4	20
3	Failing to put a quotation in quotation marks is plagiarism	9	43	5	28	15
4	Giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation is plagiarism	14	38	13	20	15
5	Changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit is plagiarism	17	40	05	25	13
6	Copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of your work, whether you give credit or not is plagiarism	26	35	14	15	10

**Table 2: Attitude of students regarding plagiarism.**

Sr. No.	Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	Sometimes one cannot avoid using other people's words without citing the source	6	28	32	27	7
2	It is justified to use one's own previously published work without providing citation in current work	4	32	26	29	9
3	Self-plagiarism is not punishable because it is not harmful	15	18	21	38	8
4	Plagiarized parts of a paper may be ignored if the paper is of great scientific value	12	24	31	27	6
5	Short deadline gives me the right to plagiarized a bit	15	31	19	29	6
6	I translate a part of a paper from a foreign language, when I do not know what to write	8	26	29	33	4
7	It is justified to use description of a method because the method remains the same	9	15	9	45	22
8	If a colleague of mine allows me to copy from his/her paper. I am not doing anything bad	13	15	22	36	14
9	Plagiarism is as bad as stealing an exam	9	18	21	42	10
10	Plagiarism impoverishes the investigative spirit	13	33	8	29	17
11	A plagiarized paper does no harm to science	16	36	29	19	0
12	Sometimes I am tempted to plagiarize because everyone else is doing it	15	42	20	20	3
13	I keep plagiarizing because I haven't been caught yet	14	1	39	23	33
14	It is not so bad to plagiarize	15	33	26	23	3
15	Sometimes I copy a sentence too just to become inspired for further writing	1	26	24	41	8
16	Self-plagiarism not be punishable in the same way as plagiarism	11	27	23	32	7
17	Young researchers who are just learning should receive milder punishment for plagiarism	22	22	18	33	5
18	The name of the authors who plagiarize should be disclosed to the scientific community	26	37	8	18	11

## DISCUSSION

The phenomenon of plagiarism is considered as an important issue in many countries as it is becoming an increasing concern around the world and we believe there may be multiple causes behind this practice. It should be remembered that the students' awareness of the plagiarism phenomenon is low and it is the main reason of plagiarism. The present was planned in 100 MBBS students to assess the knowledge and attitude of medical students towards plagiarism.

We observed that many cases of plagiarism were unintentional and aroused from lack of knowledge of citation practices, inability to write and communicate ideas in English leading to copy-paste to improve use of language in the manuscript. Very few medical students in this study knew the requirements for correctly referencing and citing material from written sources whether used in the form of a paraphrase or as direct, verbatim quotes. The similar findings were noted by Shirazi B *et al.*<sup>[5]</sup>

Most of the students lacked knowledge about some of the most basic principles of plagiarism which is in agreement with Shirazi B *et al.*<sup>[5]</sup> As confirmed in our study, a high percentage of students resort to cheating because they haven't been caught yet. It is essential to understand its aetiology if one is to decrease the practice of plagiarism. In a 2007 study from Florida by Forrester, 56% of medical students were reported to have copied material word for word providing references but without using quotation marks.<sup>[10]</sup> Our study however reveals the lack of knowledge about the need for quotation marks among the participants, leading us to speculate that this form of plagiarism may be inadvertent rather than done concisely.

## CONCLUSION

We concluded that the major reason for plagiarism is the ignorance regarding the issue. So to avoid plagiarism, proper policies should be devised by the stakeholders. Workshops, seminars, invited lectures should be arranged specifically to address the issue of plagiarism.

## LIMITATIONS

The main limitation of the study is its small sample size. However, as such, it has served as a pilot study in the research area.

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