

Emerging ecologies of Misconduct in Era of OA Challenges for Editors & Publishers

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Introduction & Scope

- **Types of misconduct**
 - **Data fabrication/Falsification/Plagiarism/Salami publications**
 - **Gift authorship/Ghost authorship**
- **Going beyond these conventional misconducts to questionable practices which fall in the grey zone.**
 - **Gaming the metrics/citation rings/fake peer reviews**
 - **AI Generated content – research frauds and paper mills.**
- **Lastly, how to check misconduct in publishing?**

Ecology of Misconduct: Current Academic Environment

- **Publish or Perish is passé**
- **Replaced by “Impact or Perish.”**
- **Unrealistic research and publication goals**
- **Commercial and Career Interests.**
- **The ethical are left behind.**
- **Questionable research practices are rewarded. [1]**

Stakes are getting higher still.

- Beyond “Publish or Perish” to “Impact or Perish.”
- Push to publish beyond numbers & towards impact.
- “Impact” is measured by metrics which are often questionable and misused.
- Goodhart’s law – as soon as an indicator is introduced gaming of the metric follows so that it loses its validity.

The Psychology of the Plagiarist

- Plagiarism is stealing and like all crimes, important to understand the psychology of the criminal. [2,3,4]
- Roots in formative years
 - Rote learning
 - Reverence for textbooks with a fervour usually reserved for religious texts.
- Lack of familiarity with the English language.
 - Plagiarism is easier than paraphrasing.
- Ignorance that even after citation, one has to express in own words and not copy the text ad verbatim.
- Lack of integrity.

Illustrative examples

- One reviewer remarked
 - *“Dear Editor, the case report is good and well described. However, most of the introduction and discussion has been copied ad verbatim from other sources and textbooks.”*
- Author’s reply
 - *“But I have done review of literature, how can I do review of literature without copying from other sources?”*

...examples...contd

- One overseas reviewer suggested the author add another reference in an otherwise well-written manuscript.
- The author, in the revised manuscript, copied whole paragraphs from that particular reference, which unfortunately for the author, was the work of the same reviewer.
- When the revised manuscript was sent back to the referee he took a very serious view and responded with harsh comments rejecting the manuscript outright based on plagiarism.
- The author when informed was perplexed. He thought that the reviewer should be happy that his work has been cited word to word, and any paraphrasing of the original text would have been sacrilege in the author's view. This illustrates that some authors may see using the same words as homage to others.

Self plagiarism

- The editorial board of our journal had a nasty surprise once.
 - After the current issue of the journal had gone online, we noticed that an identical article to one published in it had been published in another journal with a slightly different title.
 - When confronted with this self-plagiarism the authors were surprised to know that this practice was unethical.
 - Their logic was that if plagiarism is stealing how can one steal one's own work?
- We had to publish a retraction because of this duplicate publication.

These are acts of omission rather than of commissions.

- In such cases we try to take as tolerant a view as would be feasible within the constraints of editorial responsibility and legality.
- We also use the opportunity to educate the authors on the nuances of plagiarism and self-plagiarism.

Acts of commission

- Deliberate plagiarism.
- Driven by pressure of publish or perish.
- Many published in predatory journals.
- Deliberate plagiarism is highly unethical and deserves penalty.
- Often universities try to cover up such acts.
 - *“Don’t go to a university that hasn’t had at least one person fired for misconduct, because it means they are not looking for it properly.”*
 - *Dr Wager, Committee on Publication Ethics.*

Plagiarism of Images

W J G D R Y P U _ 1 1 1 _ 1 4 1 2 . g i f

CASE REPORT

CLASSICAL PRESENTATION OF DARIER'S DISEASE: A RARE DISORDER OF KERATINISATION

Atiya Mahboob, Faryal Yaqub, Zahid Shahzad, Manaal Afzaal, Moazzum Hanif,
Deeba Sattar Khan, Riffat Nasim, Aleena Khan

Department of Dermatology, Shaikh Zayed Federal Postgraduate Medical Institute, Lahore, Pakistan

Figure-1: Erythematous, discrete, scaly papules on chest and inframammary area



Figure-2: Discrete, Erythematous and hyperkeratotic papules in retroauricular area and also extending into scalp



Figure-6: Distal nail of thumb showing V-shaped notch

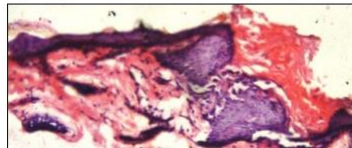


Fig 3-photograph showing brownish papular skin lesions behind the ears
Figure-3

MJDRDYPYU_111_1412.gif

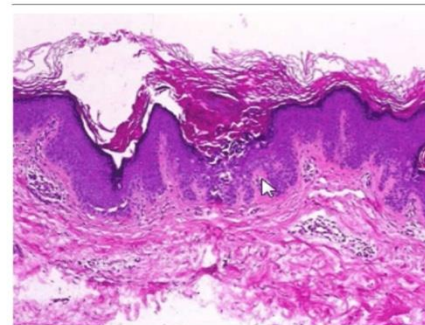


Fig 4-microphotograph showing hyperkeratosis, suprabasal acantholysis and dyskeratotic cells (H&E stain X100).
Figure-4

MJDRDYPYU_111_1413.gif

Even Nobel Laureates are vulnerable.

A Nobel prize-winning genetics researcher has retracted two more papers, bringing his total to 13.

Gregg Semenza, a professor of genetic medicine and director of the vascular program at Johns Hopkins' Institute for Cell Engineering in Baltimore, shared the 2019 Nobel in physiology or medicine for “discoveries of how cells sense and adapt to oxygen availability.”

“certain raw data” labeled to be from two different mice might also be from the same mouse. “

Source: Retraction Watch, 15 September 2024.



Plagiarism Detection...Images

- **Reverse Image Search Tool**
- **Search by Image:** Utilise advanced image search technology available through search engines like Google Images. This feature allows you to upload an image or input an image URL, initiating a search for identical or similar images across the web.
- **Advanced Image Recognition Algorithms:** Tools such as TinEye and ImageRaider employ advance image recognition algorithms to scan for duplication of images. These platforms can trace identical pictures, even if they have been altered, ensuring high image detection precision.

Plagiarism Detection Tools: Perils and Pitfalls. [3,4]

- Plagiarism detection software can mislead.
- Software can generate both false-negative and false-positive results.
- Software will not detect plagiarism of texts translated from other languages or picked up from old textbooks.
- Can become a crutch and a problem instead of resolving the issue. [4]

Perils & Pitfalls: Example from our experience.

- We got an alert from a whistleblower from South Africa
 - *“I read the article surgical repair of giant inguinoscrotal hernia containing the urinary bladder with great interest. I came across a similar article which discusses similar issues. Unfortunately, the first paper has plagiarised extensively (229 words, 25%). It is unfair to publish such an article in your esteemed journal. I wish the editors will consider this an offense as this will compromise the quality of the journal and put a question on its credibility.”*

Example of pitfall...contd

- On investigation we found that the paper from which the whistleblower had alleged plagiarism was done was authored by none other than one of the reviewers of the paper published in our journal!
- We wrote back to the whistleblower,
- *“We have examined the matter. It would interest you to know that one of the referees of the paper was Dr Panagiotakis himself, the lead author of the paper from which you say the paper published by us has been plagiarized. He had approved the paper after corrections. There are likely to be common technical terms which will inflate the similarity percentage by the software. We should use our judgement and grant benefit of doubt to the authors.”*

Example of pitfall...contd

- *We expected the whistleblower to be satisfied. He was not.*
- *“I believe the present explanation is not strong enough to support the published work is not plagiarized. If the referee has approved it does not mean the article is not plagiarized. The evidence in favour of plagiarism has been ignored. It questions the integrity of the peer review and the competence of the referee. (strong words and a loud whistle indeed!”)*

Example of pitfall...contd.

- We sought the opinion of the reviewer. He responded:
 - *“I read with great interest the exchanges. My co-authors and I do not think that there was any kind of plagiarism.”*
- At last we thought the whistleblower would be satisfied. He was not:
 - *“...A similarity index of 25% from the software needs to be taken seriously, please find COPE guidelines for your reference. I am going to report the matter to International Editors Forum!”*
- We replied that we are above board and ready to face any queries from any international forum.

Take home message

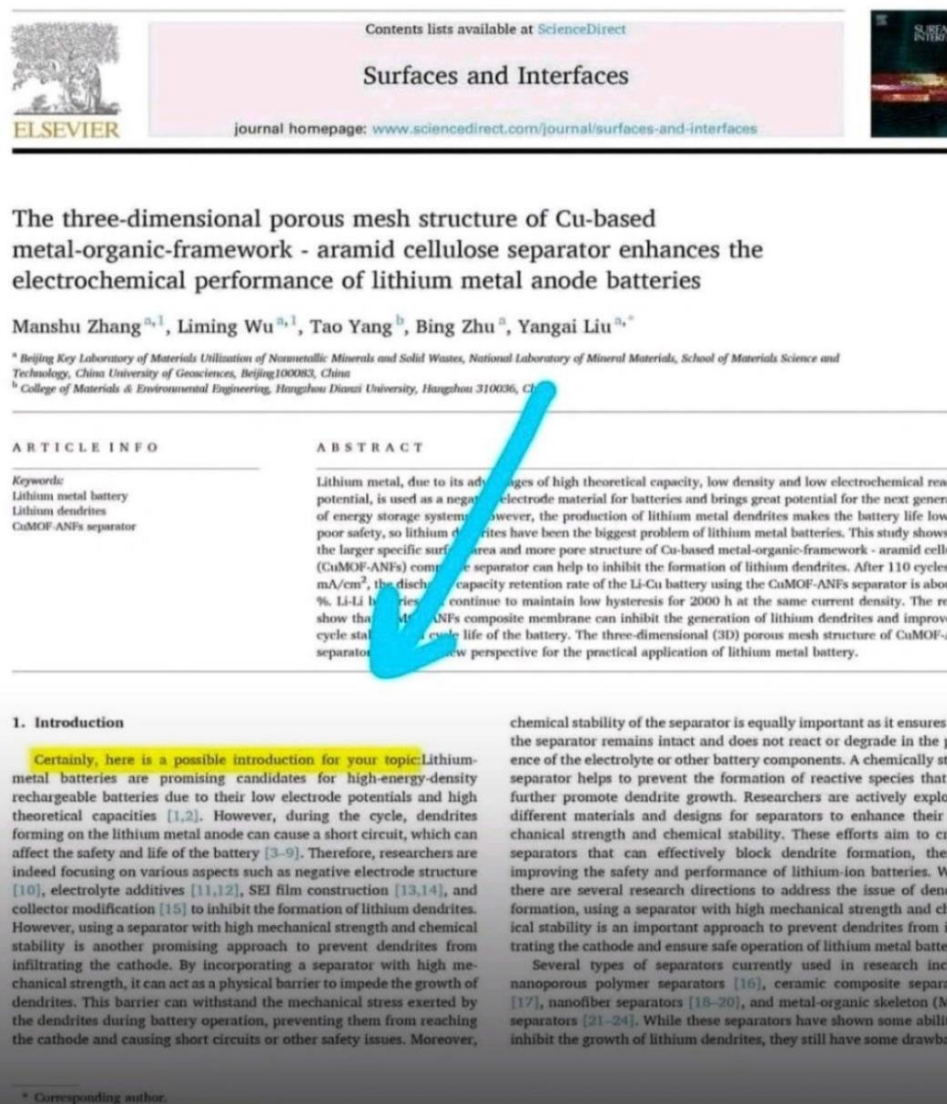
- Plagiarism detection software can mislead
- They may fail to detect plagiarism if ideas copied from a source in another language or from sources not on digital platforms such as old textbooks.
- On the other hand, outputs from software if not interpreted judiciously can wrongly conclude that the content is plagiarized as happened with our whistleblower.
- Plagiarism detection software can become a crutch and a problem instead of resolving the issue of plagiarism.
- Going strictly by % of similarity is laziness. It is like making a clinical diagnosis by looking at the lab results without examining the patient. Alas, this too is becoming nowadays.

ChatGPT and Plagiarism

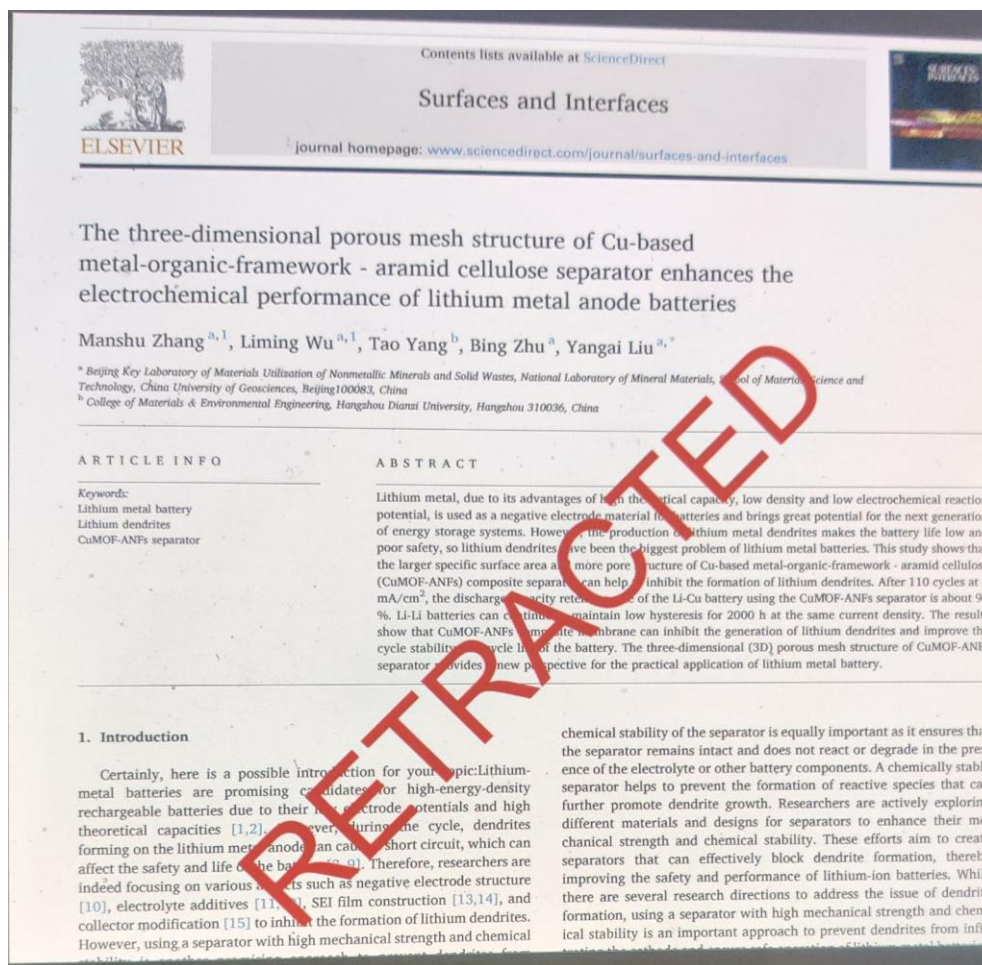
- A large chunk of plagiarized material can also point to chatbot generated content. [5]
- Authors using chatbots to prepare their manuscript should disclose the details in a transparent manner.
- Authors are accountable for the work performed by a chatbot
- Presently, most chatbots do not cite the references.
- Responsibility of authors to trace the source.
- To avoid plagiarism authors should paraphrase the text, which might have been reproduced ad verbatim.

Giveaway – AI Generated Content.

Surely, here is a possible introduction for your topic.



Post hoc - Retraction



Newer “Misconducts” ...”Questionable practices.”
Appraisal based on “peer reviewed publications.”

- Paper earns more worth based on metrics which can be gamed. [6]
- The contents may or may not have an impact.
- The misused impact factor of a journal gives currency to a paper before anyone has read it.
- The inventor of the Impact Factor Eugene Garfield rued that in the wrong hands it might be misused. [7]

Newer forms of publication misconduct

- Fake peer reviews to get published in high impact journals.
- Hacking journal databases.
- Adding additional authors in papers already in press.
- Setting up citation networks among authors.
- Universities set up paper mills to boost publication counts.
- The line between misconduct and questionable practices keep getting blurred.
- In this academic anarchy, cynics can be forgiven
- A critic of the literature has stated, “The most common outcome for those who commit fraud...is a long career.”
 - *Ivan Oransky in Gaming the Metrics. Cambridge. MIT Press 2020*

Remedial action – How to cope with publication misconduct

- **First establish that there is a misconduct**
- **Difficult in some cases involving questionable practices which may not reflect on the true worth of the paper for better or worse.**
- **Flawed research on the other hand harm humanity.**
- **When there is clear cut evidence of misconduct, the paper should be retracted, the sooner the better.**

Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) Guidelines

- COPE has published a list of situations where editors should consider retraction. [8]
- Retraction when clearly indicated laudable as a post publication self correction of the literature.
- When clear indication should be retracted as soon as possible to prevent other users citing the flawed work or misleading policy or practice.
- Retractions should carry clear labels and identified by search engines with links to the retracted paper.
- Paper should be marked “Retracted” on all online sources.

How well does retraction work?

- **Retractions unable to keep pace with ingenious methods to game the publication process. [9]**
- **Process of retraction may take a long time, if at all.**
- **If conclusive evidence either way is a long time in coming, an editor in the interim, may issue an “expression of concern.”**

Bootlegging of counterfeit literature

- Big nexus of stakeholders, as complicated as busting the ring of narcotic or counterfeit drugs, with a faceless, nameless “Don!”
- डॉन को पकड़ना मुश्किल ही नहीं नामुमकिन है।

Faceless Academic “Don!”



डॉन को पकड़ना मुश्किल ही नहीं नामुमकिन है।

Conclusion

- **Macro-environment of publishing should be cleaned of unhealthy competition.**
- **Accreditation bodies should stop using publication quantitative metrics for ranking Institutions & Universities.**
- **Support for retraction should be an important part of publication policy.**
- **Researchers reporting scientific fraud should be rewarded instead of being ridiculed or harassed.**
- **Publishers can have a corpus to pay the whistleblowers like bug bounty for ethical hackers.**
- **Academic institutions can give incentives to those attempting to correct the literature.**
- **All retractions should not be setbacks, those self correcting honest errors should be appreciated.**

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Thank You



डॉन को पकड़ना मुश्किल ही नहीं नामुमकिन है।