

Possible Self Plagiarism and Redundancy - A need to redefine journal policies in this digital age of Cloud storage and File sharing sites.

by Hassam Zulfiqar

FILE	17744-69490-1-RV_-TURNITIN_COPY.DOCX (14K)		
TIME SUBMITTED	06-JUL-2017 09:39PM	WORD COUNT	608
SUBMISSION ID	829319515	CHARACTER COUNT	3240

Possible Self Plagiarism and Redundancy - A need to redefine journal policies in this digital age of Cloud storage and File sharing sites.

Hassam Zulfiqar

Dear Editor,

Recently an article was rejected for publication on account of possible self-plagiarism and duplicate submission. The article had not been previously published by any journal as such, rather it was found online on a file sharing website as “open access”. When prompted by the editor for an explanation, the author maintained that the article had not been “published” by any Journal as such and the online upload was from author’s personal account on that file sharing website. When investigated further, the copyrights of the online document were also found exclusively with the author rather than being transferred to the website. The Editor was not satisfied by this explanation and rejected the manuscript accusing the authors of possible self- plagiarism and redundant publication. Who was wrong - although the editor may well be correct in rejecting the article but can he/she accuse the author of self-plagiarism ² in this case?

Self-plagiarism involves reusing one’s own work, ideas or data and republishing it without proper citation.¹ Duplicate submission is one of the most common types of self-plagiarism which results mostly from authors submitting an article to more than one journal simultaneously. As a result both journals might end up publishing the paper which leads to duplicate publication. ¹ There may appear to be little harm in authors submitting similar or identical manuscripts to two journals but the problem with duplicate publication is that it adds to and distorts the literature and may affect the meta-analysis by virtue of being counted more than once. Moreover it ¹ often results in the violation of copyright since most journals require authors to sign a transfer of copyright as at the time of submission.³

When searched for the copyright undertakings of various journals, majority of them stated that the article must not have been “submitted to any other Journal”. There was no explicit reference to avoid keeping the article online on author’s personal website, researchgate or any other file sharing site like scribd as in this case. If the article is even found on any of these platforms, the copyrights of the article still remain with the author himself. Moreover this “grey literature” is not subject to scrutiny when a meta-analysis or a systematic review is conducted and so it doesn’t distort the literature as such as noted previously. The Committee on Publication Ethics regarding a similar case pointed out that “It is crucial that every journal

discusses this at the editorial level and decide what they consider to be prior publication and then puts this information on their website and on the online submission system. There is no general guidance on what is considered prior publication—it has to be an individual journal decision. In some areas prepublication posting is encouraged, and may be required e.g. for clinical trials. This is a rapidly changing area and journals should be prepared to modify their policies over time, with the increasing number of prior publication options becoming available (e.g. blogs, preprint servers)” (quotes in original). Who is wrong after all? “If the journal has not been explicit about what it considers prior publication, it may be difficult to accuse the author of self-plagiarism or duplicate publication”⁴ concluded the COPE committee.

In light of the above argument, I appeal to all the editors to explicitly declare their publication policies regarding duplicate publication mentioning all those potential prepublication sites (Researchgate, Scribd, Docstoc etc) if they consider them to be a hindrance in the publication process after all they are not “journals as such”.

References

Possible Self Plagiarism and Redundancy - A need to redefine journal policies in this digital age of Cloud storage and File sharing sites.

ORIGINALITY REPORT

7 %

SIMILARITY INDEX

1 %

INTERNET SOURCES

6 %

PUBLICATIONS

%

STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1

Leopold, Seth S.. "Editorial: Duplicate Submission and Dual Publication: What Is So Wrong With Them?", *Clinical Orthopaedics and Related Research*®, 2013.

Publication

6 %

2

publicationethics.org

Internet Source

1 %

EXCLUDE QUOTES ON

EXCLUDE MATCHES OFF

EXCLUDE BIBLIOGRAPHY ON