

# A Sociological View to the Problem of Plagiarism

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**Abstract:** *Plagiarism, as a concise description, is to take someone else's idea and present as one's own without crediting the source in academic publications. In Turkey plagiarism is common as international academic area. In this short report we pointed out to sociological view of plagiarism.*

**Keywords:** Plagiarism, similarities, academic studies, academic plagiarism, European Court of Human Rights, General Assembly of the Supreme Court of Appeals

## 1. Introduction

Plagiarism, as a concise description, is to take someone else's idea and present as one's own without crediting the source in academic publications (Science Ethics 2011, Shankar 2015, [www.plagiarism.org](http://www.plagiarism.org)). Fair copying in particular, it may appear in many forms, as well as putting forth the idea without referencing the source. Since its boundaries cannot be established precisely and are concealed mostly, the realistic incidence rates of plagiarism for countries and regions are quite difficult to know.

To publish commercial articles in predatory journals without maintaining in accordance with rules or procedures and without conducting adequate control also emerges as a problem associated with an issue of plagiarism (Elmore 2020, Butler 2013). Works on reasons for plagiarism cannot reveal the underlying key factors, but give sound advice on prevention (Hafsa 2019, Rabab 2015).

The data in both national and international publications, in that regard, demonstrate that the incident is at a considerable degree. As stated on the [fastcompany.com](http://fastcompany.com) website, where detailed relevant information is shared, it has been recited that plagiarism transpires more or less in just about every country. Plagiarism and duplicate publication prevail in Italy and Finland (37.5%) all over Europe. China ranks within the top five with a value of 29.4%.

K. Amos examined 835 articles published in PubMed between the years of 2008 and 2012, in terms of plagiarism and duplicate publication. This figure introduces 0.02% of all publications within the same years. For the reason that inadequate evaluation was applied, the 14 were left out of the process, then 821 were re-examined. 754 were retracted due to plagiarism and duplication. The US and China ranked in the top two in the withdrawn publications. Of the 13 publications submitted from Turkey, 8 had to be withdrawn because of plagiarism and 1 on account of duplication (61.5% and 15.4%, respectively) (Amos 2012).

## Studies on the Incidence of Plagiarism in Our Country

Ziya Toprak has carried out a study on how frequently plagiarism is observed in dissertations, drawing attention

to being unoriginal and plagiarism, which are the most important and increasingly encountered problems recently in graduate educations in our country (Toprak, 2017). In this work, 470 masters' and 130 doctoral thesis accessible at YÖK Documentation Center were examined using Turnitin program.

Of these, 511 theses have been written in Turkish and 89 in English. The similarity rate of English theses is 24% on average and that of Turkish theses is 29%. The same rate of the theses from public universities is 28% and from foundation universities it is 31%. These rates are considered to be significantly higher than the rate of 15%, determined to be acceptable before the study conducted.

The similarity rates of Turkish theses are significantly higher than those of the ones written in English. The other interesting finding here is, similarity rates in the theses written within Foundation Universities are higher than those of within Public Universities. The rate of theses involves a high percentage of plagiarism that is 34.5%. These data display that the issue of proportion to plagiarism and duplication in our country is at a level that cannot be undervalued.

As an exemplary and notorious case of plagiarism in our country is the "Mother's Book" by Prof. Dr. İhsan Dođramacı, the founder of Higher Education Council, Bilkent and Hacettepe Universities, which is claimed to have plagiarized from the book "Baby and Child Care" by Dr Spock. The plagiarism case, raised initially by the investigative journalist the deceased Ugur Mumcu in 1981, is known to the public with the rejection of various experts and then the Supreme Court twice. Ruling that there is no plagiarism and convicting Prof. Dr. Hasan Yazici to pay compensation for mentioning plagiarism.

Ugur Mumcu, very well known journalist, and his wife coincidentally apprehended unusual similarity of both books, when they took them in their hands as references, to read through, related to their children's problems. After 10 years from Dođramacı's demise, the European Court of Human Rights ordered the reimbursement of that compensation to Prof. Dr. Hasan Yazici and justified the plagiarism charge in its decision of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) dated April 15, 2015 (Application No: 40877/07); this plagiarism case had kept the Turkish Academy busy for more than 30 years.

In the final decision of the European Court of Human Rights is stated that, "the basis for freedom of speech is to tell the truth. General Assembly of the Supreme Court of Appeals (Yargıtay) in the decision, which we found wrong, did not give the necessary importance whether Dr Yazici was telling the truth." As a result of the decision, Turkey was sentenced to repay the compensation given to Dr Hasan Yazici with interest ([turkishnews.com/tr/content/2014\\_05/19/ahm-prof-dr-ihsan-dogramaciyi-haksiz-buldu/](http://turkishnews.com/tr/content/2014_05/19/ahm-prof-dr-ihsan-dogramaciyi-haksiz-buldu/), [odatv4.com/makale/oldukten-sonra-mahkum-edildi\\_1005141200-58430](http://odatv4.com/makale/oldukten-sonra-mahkum-edildi_1005141200-58430), [istanbul.edu.tr/hasan-yazici-intihalin-dile-getirilebilme-boyutu-26-subat-2019.pdf](http://istanbul.edu.tr/hasan-yazici-intihalin-dile-getirilebilme-boyutu-26-subat-2019.pdf)).

When analysed, with regard to the countries from which the academic articles published in predatory journals, which are essential headings of ethical concerns of Academy, India is in the lead by far, with the percentage of 10.4%, Nigeria is in second place, with 4.8% and Turkey is in third, with 3.7% (Koçak 2019). What is more tragic is that 3.2% of such journals are published in our country (Akça 2018).

Plagiarism is seen as a moral incident and is regrettably not counted as a criminal issue. It is considered to be "shameful" or "misdemeanor" in many Asian countries. The genuine extent of the incident is not appreciated, and rather than plagiarism itself, those who utter a minute possibility of plagiarism might be found guilty in our country. But in fact, related studies to the topic demonstrate that plagiarism is a serious academic ethical problem both in our country and in the world.

## 2. Suggestions

Many reasons such as ignorance in academic writing, erosion and lack of appreciation of ethical assets, being unfamiliar with the theme, doing the degree not because of wondering the topic in detail and working through it, but as a compulsory task, since the thesis subject has been given to the graduate candidate, can cause plagiarism (<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/plagiarism>). The problem of plagiarism in academic publications can be prevented by raising awareness and using more effective programs that screen articles for plagiarism and duplication.

Staying away and not submitting articles from and to predatory journals are assessed as a remarkable effort (<https://predatoryjournals.com/journals>, Demir SB 2018).

To understand the underlying cause of plagiarism, related to Dođramacı case mentioned above is not possible. Professor Dođramacı, who is the most prominent child health and diseases specialist in our country and has presented great services throughout his life. Dr Dođramacı does not need plagiarism. He could have produced a much more understandable and original book than Dr Spock did, and there were no necessity for him to publish such a book. This is a sociological and sociopsychological incident and needs to be examined much more deeply and thoroughly.

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