MANUSCRIPTS WITH FAKE CHATGPT-CREATED REFERENCES: A CASE STUDY

Received: November 22, 2023
Accepted: December 20, 2023

Jaime A. Teixeira da Silva* https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3299-2772
1Independent researcher, Miki-cho, Japan

*Corresponding author:
Jaime A. Teixeira da Silva, Independent researcher, Ikenobe 3011-2, Kagawa-ken 761-0799, Japan
E-mail: jaimetex@yahoo.com

Abstract
As a continued theme in citation abuses and the need to reform the culture of citation in academic publishing, as well as an extension of the exploration of authors’ rights, this letter highlights a case in which an author’s name was abused in a fabricated citation in a preprints.org preprint that was ultimately retracted. As a punitive measure, the preprints’ authors were blacklisted. The first author then republished (minus the previous co-authors) a modified preprint at another preprint server, Research Square, where it was also retracted for the presence of fictitious citations. In such cases, it is argued that authors whose names are abused in fictitious citations, created by ChatGPT or otherwise, as identified by real authors or the paper’s readers, should have the right to not want to be cited in this manner, because it may carry with it negative reputational consequences. There are also negative reputational consequences for journals which appear in fictional citations.

Keywords: Academic publishing, Authors’ rights, Citations for sale, Citation manipulation, Paper mills


Dear CAJMHE Editors,

Some academics might attempt to amplify their work’s visibility to ultimately reap citations, using social media or other means to achieve this. Not all citation practices are honest, and citations ultimately reaped from social media, papers in academically valid (scholarly) or predatory publishing venues, as well as illicitly created or introduced citations, collectively contribute to a scholar’s citation counts, ultimately expressing themselves in author-based metrics such as the H (Hirsch)-index [1].

Even though most authors would likely be happy to receive citations to their work, and thus serving as a form of recognition to their efforts and intellect, over the past two years, a new concept has been advocated based on the premise that a rewards counterfactual is needed for citation practices, therefore authors should have the right to not want to be cited (R2WC) [2, 3]. Even if the R2WC concept might be considered by some academics as irrelevant or insignificant, it may become increasingly important to consider whether such a right needs to become formally integrated into the academic publishing pipeline, as a complement of the importance of the “right to be forgotten” [4], especially in the light of abuses of select academics, and their citations.

This letter draws attention to an abusive citation practice, which arose from the undeclared use of the large language model, ChaGPT. A preprint published in the preprint server preprint.org was retracted after the name of a Danish academic (Henrik Enghoff) was
abused in a fabricated citation that carried his name [5]. There are three references that mention Enghoff, one in a valid 1993 paper published in the Zoological Journal of the Linnean Society, while two references were fictitious, claiming to have been published in ZooKeys and European Journal of Taxonomy (see Appendix for full citations). The first author of that retracted preprint then republished (minus the co-authors) a modified preprint at another preprint server, Research Square, where it was also retracted for the presence of fictitious citations [6]. The second retraction has surprisingly not yet been indexed in the Retraction Watch / Crossref database. In essence, authors whose names are abused in fabricated citations (i.e., authors whose names or work appear in papers that have willingly fabricated, abused or otherwise manipulated their names in citations) should have the right to exercise R2WC, a right that is necessary in this current climate of dishonest research and publishing practices. In another case study, abusive practices by apparent paper mills led to an explosive rise in citations, over 1600 in total within the space of only three years, to a small commentary published in 2017 in Current Biology [7].

This case lies at the boundary of bibliometrics, citation practices, ethics and abusive publishing practices on preprint servers. It also clearly demonstrates that the rush to get work published quickly, which is one claimed advantage of preprints, carries with it risks, especially since screening tends to be superficial and rapid. In this case, the failure to detect fake (i.e., fabricated) references, and the negative reputational damage caused to the authors (i.e., researchers and scientists) who were cited (either in the fabricated references, or in the valid references), is currently an unmeasured risk. Can this risk be measured? The phenomenon of fake citation creation by ChatGPT is a fairly new phenomenon, and is beginning to be discovered by more and more academics, such as in rheumatology [8] and other fields, so bibliometric analysis might not yet reveal many patterns. However, there need to be two prerequisites for this phenomenon to be formally and effectively studied: first, preprints must not be partially or fully “silently retracted”, in which all bibliometric information and the preprint’s content was scrubbed clean [9], as occurred with the preprint.org preprint, i.e., silently retracted preprints [10]; second, citations, even fictitious ones, need to remain permanent, as open citations [11], to allow for their effective and systematic extraction and analysis, although this also carries the risk of the dissemination of false citations by authors with few scruples.

Preprint servers may be happy to capture intellect quickly, but they should ensure that that they have in place proper and stringent screening procedures prior to the publication of preprints, and that preprint managers screen references, as one of their responsibilities, to ensure their validity. Screening procedures in preprints need to be as rigorous as those in peer-reviewed journals, i.e., preprints and peer-reviewed papers must be considered “ethical equals” [12], and authors who commit ethical infractions in preprints need to be sanctioned as severely as those who commit the same infractions in peer-reviewed journals. In this particular case, academic justice was served, i.e., retraction were meted out to the author. In other words, preprint server managers and journal editors have the same responsibility of carefully screening references following submission, and preferably before initiating peer review (in the latter case) to ensure that references are not fictitious. Fictitious citations (as noted in the appendix) could reveal the unattributed use of ChatGPT, and thus constitute an ethical infraction if such usage has not been declared by the authors [13].

Fake and fictitiously created citations negatively impact authors and journals who are listed in such references, causing them reputational harm. Authors have the right to exercise R2WC if they detect an abuse of their names in such citations, while such rights need to be more formally recognized in current dominant publishing ethics-related guidelines, such as those by COPE and the ICMJE.

As Emsley [14] aptly remarked, such fictitiously created citations are not hallucinations, or figments of humans’ imaginations or psychological psychosomatoses, but real and tangible fakes that have the ability of being detected, and “treated”, leading to a healthier bibliometric handling of the scientific literature.

AUTHOR’S CONTRIBUTIONS
The author contributed to conceptual design, writing and editing of all versions of the manuscript.

DISCLAIMERS
Given its direct relevance to the manipulation of journal-related citations, which has the impact of influencing the reputation of the journals in falsified citations, this article had previously been submitted to Zoological Journal of the Linnean Society and European Journal of Taxonomy, but both journals rejected for being out of scope. LLMs or other AI such as ChatGPT, were not used. This letter, in part or whole, has not been published previously or in any other journal.
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СНАТГРТ АРҚЫЛЫ ЖАСАЛҒАН ЖАЛҒАН СІЛТЕМЕЛЕРІ БАР ҚОЛЖАЗБАЛAR:
КЕЙС-СТАДИ

Түйіндеме
Дайексезді теріс пайданалу және академиялық басымлымдарда дайексезді мәдениетін реформалу, соңдай-ақ авторлардың құқықтарын зерттеуді кенейту қажеттілігі туралы жалғасатын тақырып ретінде бұл хатта автордың аты-жөні жалған дайекзеде теріс пайданалыған жағдайл preprints.org алдын ала басып шығару керсетілген, ол акырында кері қайтарылыды. Жаза ретінде алдын ала басып шығару авторлары қараза тізімге енгізілді. Содан кейін бірінші автор басқа алдын ала басып шығару серверінде, Research Square, зәгерілген алдын ала басып шығаруды қақта шығарды (алдыңғы серікіндерді алып тастаған), онда ол ойдан шығарылыған дайекздердің болуына байланнысты кері қайтарылыды. Мұндай жағдайларда, ChatGPT жасаған немесе мақалалық нақты авторларны немесе қызмет көрсеткен жағдай жақсы дайекздердеге есімдірі теріс пайданалыған авторлар өсілайша дайекзеден бас тартуға құқылы болуы керек, біркелен бұл жағ ымсыз беделге алып келеді. Ойдан шығарылыған дереккелерде келтірілген журналдарда да жағ ымсыз беделге не болады.

Түйінді сөздер: академиялық басымлымдар, авторлық құқықтар, дайекзедерді жату, дайекздерді көзқарас.


РУКОПИСИ С ПОДДЕЛЬНЫМИ ССЫЛКАМИ, СГЕНЕРИРОВАННЫМИ СНАТГРТ:
КЕЙС-СТАДИ

Резюме
В качестве продолжающейся темы злоупотребления цитированием и необходимости реформирования культуры цитирования в академических публикациях, а также расширения изучения прав авторов в этом письме освещается случай, когда имя автора было злоупотреблено в сфабрикованной цитате в препринт preprints.org, который в конечном итоге был отозван. В качестве меры наказания авторы препринтов были внесены в черный список. Затем первый автор переиздал (за вычетом предыдущих соавторов) модифицированный препринт на другом сервере препринтов, Research Square, где он также был отозван из-за наличия вымышленных цитат. В таких случаях утверждается, что авторы, чем имена злоупотребляются в фиктивных цитатах, созданных ChatGPT или иным образом, как указано реальными авторами или читателями статьи, должны иметь право отказаться от цитирования таким образом, поскольку это влечет за собой негативные репутационные последствия. Журналы, цитируемые в вымышленных источниках, также имеют негативные последствия для репутации.

Ключевые слова: академические публикации, права авторов, продажа цитирования, манипуляции с цитированием.