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Reference Documentation in Scientific Research: Legal and Academic Requirements under Algerian Ministerial Regulations

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Abstract

This paper examines the legal and academic requirements for referencing and documentation in scientific research in Algeria, with a focus on Ministerial Order No. 1082 dated 27 December 2020, which establishes rules for preventing and combating scientific plagiarism. The topic has become more pressing in Algerian universities with the rapid expansion of digital resources and the growing use of artificial-intelligence tools for writing and paraphrasing, which can blur the boundary between legitimate assistance and unethical appropriation. Using a descriptive and analytical approach—supported by a brief comparative reading of recent international publication-ethics guidance—the study clarifies (i) the core principles of academic integrity, (ii) practical rules for quotation, citation, and bibliographic referencing, and (iii) institutional measures for awareness, supervision, and monitoring. The paper concludes with practical recommendations to improve citation practices, promote transparency when AI tools are used, and strengthen institutional training and enforcement mechanisms.

Keywords: Academic Integrity; Documentation; Citation; Plagiarism; Algeria; Ministerial Order No. 1082; Ai-assisted Writing.

1. INTRODUCTION

Accurate documentation is not a purely formal requirement: it is a cornerstone of research quality, transparency, and academic credibility. In Algerian universities, the subject is increasingly visible in everyday academic practice—through similarity-checking procedures, thesis and article review, and training activities on research ethics. At the same time, the wide availability of online databases, reference-management software, and AI-based writing tools has made both learning and misconduct easier. This situation raises a practical problem: how can researchers meet the legal and academic requirements for citation and referencing while using modern technological resources responsibly?

Research problem: Despite the existence of a clear regulatory framework (Ministerial Order No. 1082 dated 27 December 2020), many citation errors in student theses and scientific papers are still linked to (i) weak mastery of quotation and referencing rules, (ii) inconsistent documentation standards across disciplines and journals, and (iii) emerging AI-assisted writing practices that may conceal unacknowledged borrowing.

Research question: What are the main legal and academic criteria for recording, citing, and crediting information in Algerian scientific research, and how can these criteria be operationalized—especially in the context of digital and AI-assisted tools?

Methodology

The study uses (1) a descriptive method to define key concepts (academic integrity, quotation, citation, and bibliography) and to map the obligations set by Ministerial Order No. 1082 (27 December 2020); (2) an analytical method to interpret the purpose and implications of those obligations for researchers and institutions; and (3) a limited comparative approach, contrasting selected provisions and practices with recent international guidance on publication ethics and AI tool use. The comparative element is used to highlight convergences and to suggest practical improvements rather than to claim legal equivalence.

2. A General Idea of Scientific Research and Researcher Ethics

Good scientific research is that in which the researcher follows a sound scientific methodology and offers new ideas and scientific recommendations relevant in practice. It is also a good way to train in scientific thinking, dialectically connecting events, and achieving better systems than those now in power¹. Its name suggests both the approach (research) and scientific knowledge. This interpretation underlines that scientific research is a means of examining data and knowledge as well as a means of enhancing the ability of the researcher to draw conclusions and create ideas.

Scientific research is one of the indicators considered when evaluating universities, which are seen as centers of knowledge using scientific research to benefit society and raise it civilizationally, therefore helping the development of thought and the progress of science².

Therefore, it is crucial to emphasize its importance. But, unless it is original and honest, research does not merit being deemed good. The scientific researcher has to be exact in gathering their data and should base their writing on original and referenced studies and viewpoints. Scientific integrity in quoting and profiting from information is very crucial since it lends academic honesty to the work. To succeed and excel in writing and finishing their research as required and to the greatest degree, the researcher must actually have qualities, first among them attribution and scientific integrity.

Scientific research is not just about reading a reference, writing a book, or haphazardly transferring and documenting data. Research is, instead, a scientific endeavor and intellectual creation on many topics that has to be done with complete honesty and integrity. Writing the research requires the researcher to also reflect ethical responsibility and humility in their thoughts and corrections since research is a clear reflection of the process and procedures of conducting research. Presented with clarity, accuracy, and particular organisation, it is a truthful picture of the intellectual and practical activities of the researcher done during the course of conducting the study³.

2.1 The Question of Scientific Integrity and Embracing Scientific Humility

Integrity is the deliberate awareness of steering clear of what is deemed scientific plagiarism. Integrity is not about avoiding source use to finish research work; rather, it is about recognizing and valuing the writers by citing their names in line with their scientific contributions. When it comes to information, its documentation, and citations in scientific studies, we see that especially there is a close link between science and ethics. Research behavior governs the research process; the researcher is rigorously dedicated to scientific integrity and the expression of their intellectual and cognitive contributions so that their behavior stays purposeful and progressive. Scientific integrity is the following⁴:

- Presenting opinions in an objective and neutral way without distorting some of their positive qualities.
- Ethically presenting opinions, free of personal attacks.
- Presenting opinions in full, without unjustified information omission.
- Presenting jurists' opinions collectively without succumbing to religious, ethnic, or sectarian prejudice.
- Steering clear of scientifically untrustworthy remarks like those on the supervisor or overstated commitments in the thesis's core.

Furthermore, no matter how far the researcher explores their area or how great their critical skills about information, facts, and knowledge, they must practice scientific humility. This implies that the researcher should start from the notion that they will gain from professionals and should eschew hubris or the conviction that their conclusions and assessments are final. They have to also underline data and findings that challenge their preconceptions⁵.

Science is a vast ocean; the researcher should not use the plural form (we saw, we analyzed, we believe, we address, etc.) since this is a bad habit that betrays science and results from the researcher's own arrogance. Given this behavioral tendency, the researcher should refrain from condemning senior jurists and well-established theories unless they are self-assured and clear about their beliefs, therefore correcting what has to be fixed and creating new ideas where required⁶.

2.2 Scientific Integrity Commitment

Scientific research is, above all, an ethical leadership since the spirit of science is an ethical spirit; it is not only about guiding thought and recording ideas. Just as we worry for people in practical life straying from values of honor, we should also worry for those in intellectual labor—maybe even more so as this might cause readers to lose confidence⁷. The ethics of scientific research place on the scientific researcher the duty of maintaining scientific integrity

when citing any material from other works. When offering thorough information on the source of the citation, the researcher has to be truthful⁸. Attributing other people's ideas to oneself shows no integrity; it cheapens the worth and excellence of the study. Therefore, proper behavior in science calls for the researcher to credit every opinion, idea, or piece of information to its original source and show its exact position in the authorized references⁹.

Scientific research reflects its spirit in form¹⁰, content, and style; it is a mirror of its time. Thus, one of the basic values in preparing scientific research in general and legal research in particular is scientific integrity. To confirm the correctness of the attribution, one must credit original authors with ideas and knowledge. Without knowledge, those who follow will repeat a mistake made by the first transmitter¹¹. Thus, the researcher has to have intellectual integrity, honesty, and refrain from scientific plagiarism. This trait lets them record their information as it came from its sources, sending every piece of data back to its references precisely as it was sent. By doing this, the researcher guarantees before God, themselves, and all future generations that they will preserve scientific integrity and stay honest during every phase and process of their work¹².

Sometimes a scientific researcher denies the work of their predecessors and turns to copying their ideas or texts without the least mention to them or distorts what has already been referenced in this setting. This is called scientific plagiarism. Actually, this conduct, which has disturbingly grown in the academic setting, undermines the integrity and credibility of scientific research¹³. This led the agencies in charge of higher education and scientific research to think about creating tools to help the legislative framework to stop scientific plagiarism and protect the goals of scientific research by so doing supporting the development of this conduct.

In many universities worldwide, students and researchers are expected to follow scientific and professional rules—especially the principle of academic integrity. In Algeria, these expectations are reinforced by Ministerial Order No. 1082 dated 27 December 2020 issued by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, which sets out rules for preventing and combating scientific plagiarism¹⁴.

What is interesting in talking about scientific integrity is that any act done by a researcher involving unauthorized transmission or the impersonation of another's work—regardless of whether the transmitter is aware or it happened by accident, and regardless of whether the researcher is a student or professor, or whether the act was intentional or unintentional—is considered a breach of scientific integrity and, therefore, a violation of research ethics¹⁵. Representing an attack on scientific output and theft of research with its intended scientific value, it is even considered one of the most severe crimes¹⁶.

From the above, we see that the intellectual and serious activity of researchers and their embodiment of qualities and ethics that give their work credibility, quality, and achievement of its intended purpose determines the development of nations and the progress of scientific renaissance; yet, law also plays a role and influence in supporting the role of ethics by means of its binding power and the rules and remedial measures it offers to prevent and combat scientific plagiarism.

3. Dedication to Appropriate Quoting and Documentation Ministerial Order No. 1082 dated 27 December 2020 states

Citing or showing other people's ideas is part of the legitimacy of academic work; yet, when a researcher claims others' ideas as their own, it crosses the line of scientific legitimacy. This

is called "scientific plagiarism." What should be said in this respect is the need for the legal researcher to maintain scientific integrity when writing their study and to show quotes in a proper way that eliminates any uncertainty about what is the researcher's own language. Scientific research is a human and intellectual endeavor that should not be stolen, thus it is also crucial to emphasize this. Researcher Mohamed Ouda states: "Any manipulation of ideas, alteration of context, or distortion constitutes a form of research laundering¹⁷." In this sense, scientific research calls for execution with total integrity, logic, accuracy, and the researcher's ethical obligation to follow scientific honesty in managing and writing information, while referencing the source from which the ideas were derived. Throughout all phases of research preparation, the researcher must be serious and sincere and refrain from scientific theft. This is a moral duty toward the research process to safeguard others' ideas and maintain the sanctity of scientific research.

The Algerian legislator, by means of the ministerial order under consideration, has specified a series of actions depending on the concept of awareness and sensitization that could either promote or hinder the incidence of scientific plagiarism. These were seen as duties given to institutions of higher education and scientific research¹⁸.

3.1 Clarifying the Main General Rules for Scientific Referencing

Referencing is using scientific evidence—both rational and textual—from its sources to strengthen the presented idea and support it with proof. The cited material comes from either the body of the text or the footnotes¹⁹. The most important rules for citing information are as follows:

3.1.1 Quotation Policies

Writing or creating scientific research is a clear reflection of the process and procedures of conducting that research—an honest portrayal of the researcher's intellectual and scientific efforts during the preparation of their study. The researcher has to follow the tenets of academic integrity by explicitly stating the sources from which they quoted in order to earn the reader's confidence and enhance the scientific value of the work. Citing—whether much or little—is deemed theft if the source is not acknowledged. Thus, according to developed citation criteria, it is crucial for researchers not to quote from others without identifying the source and providing the pertinent information²⁰.

It is also forbidden to cite material covering an entire page. Academic studies should include scientific quotes limited to several lines. Quoting an entire page or more is a methodological error if it exceeds reasonable limits and lacks justified purpose²¹.

The main signs of appropriate quotation are therefore:

- Quoting only what is essential and required from the sources.
- Especially in legal texts, court decisions, or academic opinions, respect for the rules of literal or textual citation—including their use in legal texts, judicial decisions, or scholarly opinions—is paramount.
- Clearly separating the scholar's words from the researcher's by enclosing quotes in quotation marks.

- Especially without knowing it, avoid including material that contradicts the author's original viewpoint or court decision. Usually, quotes should be used just when the material is quite valuable for the study.

3.1.2 Bibliographic Referencing

Citing is a standardized and necessary technique for recording the data referenced in a research article. Writing any research—regardless of its kind or approach—requires careful consideration of this essential component. The referenced source could be an online reference, doctoral thesis, report, journal paper, article, book, or any other type of publication.

Particularly with regard to the correctness of scientific footnoting, it is important to highlight ongoing problems in citation methods that need to be fixed. Correct footnotes have to include all basic components: the author's complete name, title of the book or scientific study, edition information, publishing house, location of publication, year of publication, and page number.

Therefore, correct referencing and bibliographic citation are absolutely vital since they assist to guarantee the accuracy and dependability of the material shown in the study²². Usually, referencing helps to:

- Clarify the effort exerted by the researcher in identifying relevant sources.
- Reflect the ethics and academic integrity of the researcher as well as their dedication to the standards of scientific inquiry.
- Assist the researcher in highlighting the uniqueness and validity of their work.
- Help people find academics and authors so they may interact.

3.2 Ensuring the Integrity of Scientific Research through the Guidelines of Ministerial Decree No. 1082 of 2020

Dealing with scientific plagiarism in the academic community is a major factor in judging the standard of education at universities; it is also a vital component in guaranteeing the validity of scientific research. Undoubtedly, it is related to the ethical criteria of the researcher. Any researcher must possess academic integrity, honesty, and credibility. A researcher who follows ethical standards by guaranteeing academic honesty and meticulously citing the sources of all knowledge and opinions demonstrates real scientific research and creativity; it is not enough for them to just record everything they read.

We stress that the value added to the scientific community, especially in terms of the originality of the information provided and its suitable application to fulfill the noble objectives of the study, defines the quality of scientific research. Particularly in the fight against and restriction of scientific plagiarism, this helps to enhance the process of scientific and knowledge growth. Ministerial Order No. 1082 of 2020 was issued to handle this problem with specific provisions on several kinds of scientific plagiarism including quotation and the imitation of others' ideas in any form. The ministerial order seeks to prevent and fight scientific plagiarism by means of various measures whose implementation can be summarized as follows:

A. Higher education and research institutions' dedication to carry out awareness and improvement initiatives:

- Conducting training seminars on scientific documentation policies.

- Holding seminars and study days for professors and students working on doctoral theses.
- Including ethics in research and documentation at every level of higher education.

B. Doctoral training supervision and research activities organization: This means guaranteeing that every research supervisor follows their field of knowledge when supervising research initiatives.

C. Putting Monitoring Policies into Effect: This calls for the creation of a database for all works produced by faculty members and students at higher education and research institutions²³.

4. Conclusion

This paper clarified key rules for quotation, citation, and bibliographic referencing under Algerian ministerial regulations—especially Ministerial Order No. 1082 (27 December 2020). It highlighted that many practical errors stem from weak methodological training, inconsistent documentation standards, and emerging AI-assisted writing practices that can hide unacknowledged borrowing. Strengthening training, supervision, and transparent disclosure of AI tool use are essential to protect academic credibility and the reputation of Algerian universities.

Recommendations

- 1) Develop and institutionalize short training modules on documentation, citation styles, and research ethics for undergraduate and postgraduate students.
- 2) Require transparency about the use of AI tools (e.g., for drafting, editing, translation, or data analysis) in accordance with journal/university policies, while maintaining full human accountability.
- 3) Strengthen supervision and similarity-checking procedures, with clear disciplinary measures for confirmed plagiarism cases.
- 4) Update institutional reference lists and citation guides regularly to reflect current digital and AI-related practices and internationally recognized ethics guidance.
- 5) We advise the need of ongoing awareness and direction on the topic of dedication to scientific integrity as well as the rigorous application of sanctions for any researcher who breaches research standards or commits scientific plagiarism.

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