

Autoplagiarism and Its Impact on Maritime Occupational Health

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Abstract

Introduction: Scientific integrity violations in maritime occupational health research have escalated alarmingly, yet remain systematically underexamined. This study aimed to map patterns, triggering factors, and ethical implications of autoplagiarism within maritime worker research publications.

Method: A narrative review was conducted across PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar (2015–2025), yielding eight synthesized articles.

Results: Three dominant autoplagiarism manifestations were identified: redundant publication, text recycling, and salami publication, driven by scarce primary data accessibility, absence of domain-specific publication ethics guidelines, publish-or-perish pressures, and homogeneous researcher communities undermining peer-review.

Conclusions: These practices systematically distort the evidence base informing IMO and ILO maritime health policies while impeding genuine intervention innovation for globally vulnerable seafaring populations. Comprehensive reform across three levels is urgently warranted: mandatory prior publication disclosure by journal editors, ethics literacy institutionalization in postgraduate curricula, and establishment of an open maritime research data registry to structurally eliminate dataset recycling incentives.

Keywords: autoplagiarism, maritime occupational health, research integrity, redundant publication, publication ethics

Abstrak

Pendahuluan : Pelanggaran integritas ilmiah dalam riset kesehatan kerja maritim terus meningkat secara mengkhawatirkan, namun belum pernah dikaji secara sistematis. Kajian ini bertujuan memetakan pola, faktor pemicu, dan implikasi etis autoplagiarisme dalam publikasi riset tenaga maritim.

Metode : Narrative review dilakukan terhadap PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, dan Google Scholar (2015–2025), menghasilkan delapan artikel tersintesis.

Hasil Studi : Tiga bentuk autoplagiarisme dominan teridentifikasi: redundant publication, text recycling, dan salami publication, yang dipicu oleh kelangkaan aksesibilitas data primer, absennya panduan etika penerbitan berbasis domain, tekanan publish-or-perish, serta homogenitas komunitas peneliti yang melemahkan efektivitas peer-review.

Kesimpulan : Praktik-praktik ini mendistorsi basis bukti yang menginformasikan kebijakan kesehatan maritim IMO dan ILO, sekaligus menghambat inovasi intervensi bagi populasi pelaut yang rentan secara global. Reformasi menyeluruh pada tiga level mendesak dilakukan: kewajiban prior publication disclosure oleh editor jurnal, institusionalisasi literasi etika dalam kurikulum pascasarjana, dan pembentukan registry data riset maritim terbuka guna mengeliminasi insentif struktural daur ulang dataset.

Kata Kunci: autoplagiarisme, kesehatan kerja maritim, research integrity, redundant publication, publication ethics

Introduction

Scientific integrity constitutes the foundational pillar upon which the credibility of the global academic publication ecosystem rests. Among its various violations, autoplagiarism defined as the reuse of one's own previously published work without transparent acknowledgment to create an impression of novelty has attracted growing scholarly concern. This practice is not merely a procedural transgression; it represents a fundamental breach of epistemological honesty that is prerequisite to the legitimate advancement of scientific knowledge.¹ At the global level, redundant publication has surged dramatically, with documented increases threatening the integrity of collective scientific records and depleting limited peer-review resources.²

The maritime occupational health domain presents a research landscape of particular ethical vulnerability. Maritime workers comprising seafarers, fishermen, port crew, and dockers are exposed to multidimensional occupational hazards encompassing physical risks, psychosocial stressors, and prolonged social isolation. Yet the scientific evidence base for this population remains sparse; between 2016 and 2021, fewer than 300 maritime health articles were published globally, predominantly observational in design and lacking longitudinal cohort evidence.³ This scarcity of primary data structurally incentivizes researchers to recycle previously published datasets or narratives across multiple publications a practice ethically classified as autoplagiarism.⁴

Self-plagiarism accounts for approximately one in five scientific article retractions globally, with a median detection lag of over three years.⁵ The biomedical and occupational health fields are particularly susceptible, and the maritime sector, characterized by a small, geographically concentrated research community, is arguably more vulnerable than most. When the pool of active researchers is narrow, peer-review mechanisms that normally detect overlapping publications lose their effectiveness, as reviewers frequently share institutional or collaborative ties with manuscript authors.⁶

The proliferation of AI-assisted writing tools has introduced a new and compounding dimension to this vulnerability. Generative AI systems enable rapid manuscript production by reformulating existing content including an author's own prior publications into superficially novel texts without substantive intellectual contribution. This technological affordance

blurs the already contested boundary between legitimate synthesis and ethically problematic recycling, and poses detection challenges that conventional similarity-checking software was not designed to address.² In resource-constrained research environments such as maritime occupational health, where datasets are limited and researcher communities are homogeneous, AI-assisted repackaging of prior findings risks normalizing autoplagiaristic practices under the guise of efficiency.⁷

Despite growing discourse on research integrity in biomedical publishing, studies that explicitly examine autoplagiarism within the specific context of maritime occupational health are virtually absent. Existing publication ethics scholarship overwhelmingly addresses general biomedical or clinical research, without accounting for the structural peculiarities of maritime science: limited population accessibility, narrow researcher networks, and strong international regulatory pressure from bodies such as the IMO and ILO.⁸ This domain-specific gap leaves maritime researchers without contextually grounded normative guidance.⁹

This study addresses that gap by systematically mapping the patterns, forms, and contributing factors of autoplagiarism in maritime occupational health research through a structured narrative literature review. The study pursues three interrelated objectives: to identify documented forms of autoplagiarism in maritime health publications; to examine the structural, institutional, and contextual factors that drive its occurrence; and to analyze its ethical implications for the integrity of the scientific evidence base informing global maritime health policy. The novelty of this work lies in its intersection of two disciplines that have developed largely in parallel: scientific publishing ethics and maritime occupational health.

The significance of this inquiry extends beyond academic discourse. International regulatory bodies including the ILO and IMO rely on a valid and non-duplicated scientific evidence base when drafting occupational safety conventions and health standards for seafarers. A contaminated evidence base artificially inflated by redundant or recycled publications risks producing policies misaligned with the real conditions of maritime labor. This study therefore contributes both a theoretical framework for understanding autoplagiarism in niche scientific domains and a practical reference for journal editors, maritime research institutions, and policymakers committed to evidence-based occupational health governance.¹⁰

Method

This study employed a narrative literature review approach to synthesize existing evidence on autoplagiarism patterns and their implications within maritime occupational health research. Literature searches were conducted across four internationally indexed electronic databases, namely PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, covering publications from 2015 to 2025. Search terms were constructed using Boolean operators (AND, OR) combining the following keywords: “autoplagiarism,” “self-plagiarism,” “redundant publication,” “publication

ethics,” “maritime workers,” “occupational health,” and “research integrity.” Inclusion criteria required articles to be peer-reviewed, accessible in full text, and directly or indirectly relevant to publication ethics or occupational health in maritime contexts. Articles outside the designated time range, lacking full-text access, or non-indexed were excluded. Article selection proceeded through two sequential stages: title and abstract screening, followed by full-text review. Final synthesis was conducted thematically, grouping findings according to patterns, contributing factors, and ethical implications of autoplagiarism within the maritime occupational health domain.

Table 1. Synthesis of relevant articles: *autoplagiarism* in maritime occupational health research

Yes	Title of Article/ Journal	Author & Year	Method	Results	Implications
1	<i>Long Working Hours, Poor Sleep Quality, and Work-Family Conflict: Determinant Factors of Fatigue Among Indonesian Tugboat Crewmembers</i>	Mansyur et al. (2021) ¹¹	<i>A comparative cross-sectional study</i> involving 127 tugboat crews from 15 randomly selected ships in the Port of Samarinda, Indonesia. Measures of fatigue using <i>reaction timers</i> and standardized questionnaires; sleep quality was assessed using the <i>Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index</i> (PSQI); work-family conflict was measured using the <i>Work-Family Conflict Scale</i> (WCFS)	As many as 40.2% of subjects were classified as experiencing work fatigue. The three statistically significant determinants were long working hours (>72 hours/week) with <i>adj. OR</i> = 13.32; poor sleep quality with <i>adj. OR</i> = 4.49; and work-family conflict with <i>adj. OR</i> = 2.87 ($p < 0.05$ each). Personal factors such as age, marital status, and smoking habits did not show a meaningful association with fatigue	This research was replicated repeatedly in various Indonesian ports with similar populations and instruments but without substantial contextual differentiation, creating the potential for <i>redundant publications</i> . The lack of methodological variation in the study of tugboat crew fatigue reflects one of the structural roots of the practice of <i>autoplagiarism</i> in the field of maritime occupational health
2	<i>Examining Perceptual Differences in Maritime Safety Climate: A Case Study of Korean Seafarers</i>	Jung (2021) ¹²	The questionnaire survey of 261 Korean seafarers used seven <i>safety climate indicators</i> adopted from the aviation and maritime sectors. The analysis was conducted comparatively between seafarers operating on domestic and international routes	Sailors serving in international shipping show a higher awareness of aspects of management involvement, organizational commitment, learning systems, and reporting. Insignificant differences were found in the dimensions of communication and employee empowerment. The survey method used is considered effective as a maritime <i>safety measurement tool</i>	The identical survey instruments were reused in various <i>safety climate studies</i> without significant conceptual modifications, showing a pattern of <i>text recycling</i> in the method and theoretical framework. This illustrates how the limitations of raw instruments in the maritime field encourage the implicit recycling of scientific works

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3	<i>Self-Plagiarism in Project Studies: A Call for Action and Reflection</i>	G e r a l d i (2021) ¹³	<i>Editorial review</i> based on conceptual reflection and normative analysis of <i>manuscript recycling practices</i> in scientific publications in the field of project management, especially <i>Project Management Journal</i> (PMJ)	The PMJ editorial board formulates four principles of <i>self-plagiarism</i> assessment: <i>ownership</i> , <i>honesty</i> , <i>originality</i> , and academic <i>citizenship</i> . Moderate manuscript recycling is considered ethically acceptable if it meets these four principles and does not harm the academic community systemically	Geraldi's proposed four-principle ethical framework is relevant as a normative reference for maritime occupational health researchers in evaluating the tolerance limits of reuse of works. This approach asserts that <i>autoplagerism</i> is not a monolithic concept, but rather an ethical continuum that requires contextual and discipline-specific judgments
4	<i>E t h i c a l Considerations in Maritime Cybersecurity Research</i>	O r u c (2022) ⁸	<i>Literature review</i> of ethical issues in maritime <i>cybersecurity research</i> . The study identified six ethical principles and four categories of ethical dilemmas that are relevant to researchers in the maritime sector	Maritime <i>cybersecurity</i> research faces a unique ethical dilemma because published findings have the potential to be exploited by irresponsible parties. Six ethical principles identified as guiding responsible scientific decision-making in the context of onboard cybersecurity risks	The findings of this study expand the understanding that ethical issues in maritime research are not limited to plagiarism, but cover a broader dimension including responsibility for the impact of publications. Implications for <i>autoplagerism</i> : maritime researchers who recycle <i>cybersecurity</i> findings without context updates risk misleading maritime cybersecurity policymakers
5	<i>Plagiarism and Self-Plagiarism in Occupational Health Research: Insights and Current Perspectives</i>	Sholihah (2025) ⁶	<i>The literature review</i> used search techniques on Cochrane, Google Scholar, Scopus, and PubMed databases with <i>MeSH terms</i> . Sources are limited to English-language journals published between 2018 and 2025	Plagiarism is the dominant form of scientific infringement in the Asian region (South, East, and Southeast Asia). <i>Self-plagiarism</i> is identified through duplication of text or results from previous publications belonging to the same author. The three practical steps of prevention formulated include: proper citation, synthesis of knowledge, and contribution of original analysis	This study is the most directly relevant reference to the topic of the journal that is being prepared. Sholihah's findings confirm that occupational health research in Asia, including maritime population-based studies, is in a high-risk zone for <i>self-plagiarism</i> practices, so publication ethical literacy interventions among Asian maritime researchers are very urgent

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6	<i>Simultaneous Tasks as a Contributory Factor to Maritime Accidents: A Socio-Cultural Approach</i>	Rajapakse et al. (2022) ¹⁴	An exploratory qualitative study uses <i>face-to-face interviews</i> with seafarers who have been involved in maritime accidents. Data analysis was carried out with a qualitative interpretive and descriptive approach based on socio-cultural perspectives	Significant changes in maritime regulations in recent decades have substantially increased the workload of seafarers. Sailors tend to multitask to compensate for administrative overload and crew shortages. Weak <i>speak-up</i> culture on board exacerbates the risk of accidents due to the simultaneous execution of tasks	The regulatory pressures and overwork that seafarers experience reflect a structural condition that maritime occupational health researchers also experience: the demands of high productivity with limited resources. This condition indirectly encourages the practice of <i>autoplagerism</i> as a shortcut to fulfilling publication obligations amid limited primary data available
7	<i>Ship First: Seafarers' Adjustment of Records on Work and Rest Hours</i>	Baumler et al. (2021) ¹⁵	Qualitative research used semi-structured interviews with 20 seafarers to analyze the practices of recording working hours and breaks and the motivations behind <i>record adjustment</i>	Almost all of the seafarers in the study admitted to manipulating work hours and rest records to hide violations, especially during port operations. The imbalance between workload and crew numbers is a major trigger. Fear of third-party inspections and corporate pressure creates a <i>ship-first</i> culture that puts the interests of ships above regulatory compliance	The phenomenon of record manipulation by seafarers has a direct analogy to the practice of <i>autoplagerism</i> in scientific publications: both are adaptive responses to systemic pressures at the expense of integrity standards. This pattern confirms that ethical violations in the maritime environment, both operational and academic, stem from deeper institutional governance failures
8	<i>Job Resources and Perceived Work Capability at Sea: The Mediator Role of Seafarers' Sleep Quality</i>	Buscema et al. (2026) ¹⁶	<i>Cross-sectional survey</i> of 406 Italian sailors from various shipping companies. The analysis used a <i>structural equation model</i> (SEM) to test the relationship between <i>job resources</i> , sleep quality, and <i>self-perceived work capability</i>	Safety <i>behaviour</i> was shown to be directly and strongly related to work capabilities, while social support and transformational leadership showed no significant direct effects. Sleep quality has been shown to be a full mediator between social support and work capabilities. The <i>safety climate</i> on board is the strongest predictor of positive work outcomes	This study represents a recurring <i>cross-sectional</i> trend in maritime occupational health research with a variable framework similar to previous publications. Without substantial conceptual development, this kind of design replication is vulnerable to being classified as <i>redundant publications</i> , especially when the findings do not make a new theoretical contribution to the <i>existing</i> body of knowledge

Results

The eight articles above are synthesized based on their relevance to the two main dimensions of this study, namely: (1) the characteristics of occupational health research in the maritime environment that form vulnerability to *autoplagerism*, and (2) the perspective of the ethics of scientific publishing that can be used as a framework for evaluating the practice.

Discussion

A review of the eight synthesized articles revealed the existence of repetitive patterns that characterize the practice *Autoplagerism* in Maritime Workforce Occupational Health Research. The first and most dominant pattern is *redundant publication*, i.e., the tendency to publish findings that are substantially identical to previous work simply by changing geographic location or sample size without presenting a meaningful conceptual contribution. This is manifested in studies of tug crew fatigue in various Indonesian ports, where the measurement instruments, research designs, and analytical frameworks used are almost uniform in each publication without substantial methodological differentiation.¹⁴ Replication without this kind of innovation results in an accumulation of literature that appears to be quantitatively productive, but poor in epistemological contribution.

The second pattern identified is *Text Recycling*, i.e. the reuse of parts of the text, especially in the methods section, literature review, and discussion from previous publications without transparent attribution. In the context of research *Safety Climate Maritime*, it was found that standard survey instruments were used repeatedly in various studies without conceptual modifications, while the narratives describing the instruments tended to be identical between publications. This condition technically meets the definition *Text Recycling* As identified in cross-disciplinary studies, where the method part is the segment that is most often recycled because it is considered to be neutral and purely technical.¹¹

The third pattern is *Salami Publication* or breaking down a large data set into several small publications, each containing only a portion of the findings. This pattern is seen in survey-based studies *Cross-sectional* in the maritime environment, where data from the same

single instrument are partially analyzed and published in separate articles with a focus on different variables but identical populations. This kind of practice is ethically in the gray area, because on the one hand it can be justified as an organized scientific dissemination strategy, but on the other hand it has the potential to mislead readers and artificially inflate the number of publications.¹³

The three patterns *redundant publication*, *Text Recycling*, and *Salami Publication* is a form of *Self-plagiarism* most commonly found in occupational health research in the Asian region, including studies involving maritime worker populations. All three have the same roots, namely the pressure to meet publication quotas in an academic system that prioritizes quantity over quality. What distinguishes the maritime context from other fields is the narrow community of researchers active in this field, so that the recycling of works tends to go undetected because *reviewer* The available ones also come from the same circle. Identifying these patterns is a crucial first step before contextual and targeted detection and prevention mechanisms can be designed.⁶

Emergence *Autoplagerism* In Maritime Occupational Health Research, it cannot be understood as a mere individual phenomenon, but is the product of a complex interaction between structural, institutional, and contextual factors that are typical of the maritime scientific ecosystem. The most fundamental structural factor is the scarcity of accessible primary data. The maritime population, particularly seafarers active on board, is exceptionally difficult to reach for research purposes owing to high occupational mobility, restricted communication channels, and stringent regulations governing shipboard activity. Consequently, researchers tend to draw repeatedly on the same limited datasets across multiple analyses, producing a body of publications with substantially overlapping empirical foundations. A comparable dynamic has been documented in other geographically and infrastructurally constrained health settings, where efforts to map digital health interventions across underserved regions were similarly hampered by fragmented population access and inconsistent data infrastructure, pushing researchers toward narrower and more repetitive evidentiary bases despite screening extremely large volumes of records.¹⁷ This parallel suggests that data-access scarcity is not unique to maritime research but is a broader structural condition of hard-to-reach occupational and geographic populations, one that structurally encourages redundant publication not primarily through researcher

misconduct, but through objective constraints inherent to the population under study.⁸

The second factor is the pressure of excess workload experienced by both the study subjects and by the researcher himself. Massive changes in maritime regulations have created a heavy administrative burden for seafarers, forcing them to cut corners to meet the demands of the system. The same analogy applies to researchers in the field of maritime occupational health: the pressure *of publish or perish* in academic evaluation systems encourages them to maximize publication *output* from the same data set, resulting in a pattern of *publication salami* that is difficult to distinguish from genuine scientific contributions. This condition is exacerbated by the lack of institutional incentives that value the depth of research compared to the frequency of publications.

The third contributing factor is the absence of domain-specific publishing ethics guidelines within maritime occupational health research. Unlike clinical medicine, which benefits from well-established editorial standards, this field lacks a shared normative framework defining acceptable boundaries for the reuse of prior work. This gap becomes particularly striking when set against the relative maturity of ethics guidance found elsewhere in occupational health scholarship, where reviews of informed consent practice in workplace nutrition interventions, digitally mediated clinical consent procedures, and workplace mental health research have each articulated fairly detailed procedural standards covering voluntariness, comprehension, confidentiality, and the right of withdrawal.^{7,18,19} That such standards have been consolidated for the subject-protection side of occupational health research, while no analogous consolidation exists for the publication-conduct side, underscores that the absence of guidance in maritime research is not an inevitable feature of occupational health scholarship generally, but a specific and correctable omission. Studies in adjacent disciplines have proposed core principles including ownership, honesty, originality, and academic citizenship as the basis for evaluating manuscript recycling practices, yet even these remain debated rather than codified.²⁰ For a narrower and less institutionally developed field such as maritime occupational health, this normative gap is considerably more acute, leaving researchers without clear guidance on ethically accountable publication conduct.¹⁶

The fourth factor is the homogeneity of the community of researchers operating in this field. Since the number of active researchers in the field of maritime occupational health is very limited, the *peer-review* mechanism that is supposed to serve as a gatekeeper of quality and originality becomes less effective. *The reviewer* assigned to review a manuscript is often a colleague or even a former research partner of the author in question, so the potential for *autoplagerism* detection is very low. This cycle creates a publishing ecosystem that inadvertently tolerates and even facilitates the practice of recycling scientific papers that should be recognized and acted upon.

The ethical implications of autoplagerism in maritime occupational health research extend well beyond individual academic misconduct; they fundamentally compromise the integrity of the evidence base upon which international maritime health policy depends. The most immediate consequence is the distortion of cumulative scientific knowledge. When redundant publications studies analyzing substantially the same exposures in the same populations are treated as independent contributions, meta-analyses, and systematic reviews built upon them count identical findings more than once, producing systematically inflated or biased effect estimates. In maritime occupational health, where the total volume of primary studies is already limited, this kind of artificial amplification is particularly damaging: policy recommendations on seafarer working hours, mental health interventions, and onboard safety standards may rest on an evidence base that appears broader and more convergent than it genuinely is.^{21,15}

The second implication concerns the erosion of institutional trust in maritime research outputs. The IMO and the ILO rely on independent, non-duplicated scientific evidence when drafting occupational safety conventions and health standards for seafarers. When that evidence base is contaminated by recycled publications that manufacture the illusion of scientific consensus, resulting policies risk being misaligned with the actual occupational realities of maritime labor. This risk is not hypothetical: retrospective analysis of retracted articles across disciplines shows that self-plagiarism-related retractions carry a median detection lag of 3.2 years, meaning that distorted evidence may inform policy decisions for years before its compromised quality is formally recognized.⁵ In niche domains with

small, overlapping researcher communities such as maritime occupational health, this detection lag is likely even longer given the diminished probability of independent identification.⁶

A third and increasingly urgent implication concerns the intersection of autoplagiarism with the accelerating adoption of generative AI tools in academic manuscript preparation. The rapid growth in redundant publications documented at a 17-fold increase between 2022 and 2024 suggests a systemic failure of editorial checks, with current plagiarism detection mechanisms no longer adequate in the generative AI era. Generative AI enables researchers to reformulate prior publications into superficially novel manuscripts with minimal intellectual labor, producing outputs that can evade conventional similarity-detection thresholds. Synthetic manuscripts created by large language models to evade detection have yielded overall similarity scores as low as 14–26%, with individual similarity contributions falling below the typical 5% warning thresholds used by plagiarism detectors. In resource-constrained maritime research environments where datasets are limited and methodological templates are standardized, this technological affordance structurally lowers the barrier to epistemologically redundant publication.²

Beyond detection evasion, the normalization of AI-assisted manuscript production raises a deeper concern about the dehumanization of scientific writing itself. Increasing reliance on AI tools in academic writing has sparked growing concerns about the erosion of originality and genuine intellectual contribution, with “humanizer” tools further developed to disguise AI-generated text and bypass detection mechanisms. In occupational health research specifically, the integration of generative AI into manuscript preparation and peer review processes introduces risks to the quality and independence of scientific outputs, with implications that are particularly acute when the subject population seafarers belongs to a structurally vulnerable group whose welfare depends on rigorous, contextually grounded evidence.²²Volume. 75, Issue. 5, 2 July 2025\nBackground: Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) When generative AI is used not to augment genuine analytical effort but to repackage prior findings into novel-appearing publications, the result is an expanding body of literature that is epistemologically hollow: voluminous in appearance but impoverished in contribution. This dynamic has triggered what some scholars describe as a broader crisis of information integrity in scientific publishing,

one that maritime occupational health with its narrow research community, scarce primary data, and high-stakes policy dependencies is structurally ill-equipped to withstand.^{23,10}

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that autoplagiarism in maritime occupational health research manifests primarily through redundant publication, text recycling, and salami publication, driven by the structural scarcity of accessible primary data, the absence of domain-specific publishing ethics guidelines, publish-or-perish pressures, and the homogeneity of researcher communities that undermines effective peer-review. The growing integration of generative AI into manuscript production further amplifies these risks by enabling epistemologically redundant outputs that evade conventional detection. The cumulative effect is a systematically distorted evidence base with direct implications for the validity of IMO and ILO maritime health policies and the welfare of globally vulnerable seafaring populations; addressing this requires coordinated reform across journal editorial policy, postgraduate ethics curricula, and the establishment of an open maritime research data registry.

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