DESIDOC Journal of Library & Information Technology, Vol. 45, No. 3, May 2025, pp. 208-216, DOI : 10.14429/djlit.20459

Perception of Ethical Considerations in Social and Humanistic Research: A Study with Scholars of Banaras Hindu University

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ABSTRACT

Perception of ethical issues in academic and professional environment has become extremely essential with the increasing instances of misconduct in research. The present study tests the perception level of research scholars in the disciplines of social sciences and arts & humanities of Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi on various issues on research ethics. An open-ended questionnaire was distributed and 332 responses received from the scholars have been used for analysis. The results show researchers still perceived honesty (23 %), integrity/ dignity (18 %), responsible publication (10 %) as the top three issues under research ethics. There was lack of awareness on ethical issues like openness, informed consent, accountability etc. Scholars of social sciences and humanities are not well accustomed with existing ethical guidelines and they breach ethical norms. Despite several earlier studies mentioned that use of AI in research generate closely resemble existing research, therefore lacks transparency, non-neutral, hallucinated results, at least 34 % respondents are using/have used ChatGPT in research, mostly for academic writings followed by review of literature. Almost 36 % scholars have agreed that either they or their fellow researchers engaged in the data falsification, fabrication or manipulation in research, in spite, 52 % researchers believe in maintaining honesty, fairness and integrity in research is necessary. This research recommends the constitution of research ethics monitoring committee at university level to serve as a gatekeeper on the issues like informed consent, covert research, potentially sensitive topics, conflict of region, vulnerable participants.

Keywords: Research ethics; Social and humanities research ethics; Social ethics; Research ethics-India; Social and humanities research-India

1. INTRODUCTION

Ethics, in a general context, are standards for behavior that differentiate between what is acceptable and what is not. Research ethics, on the other hand, encompass methods, procedures, or perspectives that guide decision-making and the analysis of complex issues. These standards aid members in aligning their actions and help build public trust in their field. European Commission's *E*thics in Social Science & Humanities[1,2] has articulated five scenario analysis, representing different types of ethical violations commonly encountered in research.

There are several reasons to maintain ethical norms in research. Firstly, these norms are essential for promoting the aims of research, such as advancing knowledge, fostering trust, and avoiding errors. They prohibit fabrication, falsification, or misrepresentation of research data[3]. Codifying guidelines for authorship pattern, intellectual property rights and patenting policies, data distribution policies, and confidentiality rules encourages collaboration. Secondly, ethical practices establish the research accountable, especially those funded by public money, making them answerable to the public[4]. Additionally, stakeholders are more willing to disburse funds if the quality and integrity of the research and the researchers involved is unquestionable. And, research norms expand various important social and moral values, including social responsibility, legal compliance, and public safety.

Perception of ethical issues in academic and professional environment has become extremely essential for every stage in research. In each stage, adhering to the ethics is essential[5]. University research is characterised by ever-increasing demand for new findings, insufficient funds, quantity over quality etc., which creates an environment for breaches in standard norms, violating ethical principles, or ethically questionable or unacceptable findings.

In any academic set-up, the three stakeholders engaged in research are the academic staff, the research scholars and scientists/post-doc fellows. Among these three a major portion of research is conducted by the PhD scholars enrolled in university for which government is disbursing funds. Banaras Hindu University, Asia's largest residential university is unique by its nature in the sense that a wide number of subjects are being taught over here and almost

Received : 13 August 2024, Revised : 04 March 2025
Accepted : 11 March 2025, Online published : 09 May 2025

all departments are running PhD research degree courses. While the Faculty of Social Sciences have 10 centres/ departments, the Faculty of Arts have 23 department/ centres. According to Official Record, Banaras Hindu University has 1504 registered Ph.D. scholars in Social Science (Soc Sci.) and Arts & Humanities (A&H) in 2023. Of them 968 enrolled in Arts & Humanities and 536 in Social Science. For such a diverse academic set-up it is crucial to examine the extent to which research scholars are familiar with research ethics and whether they employ any methods during their research that are ethically questionable or unacceptable.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Almost 40 years ago, Hunt[6] first conducted a study to know the ethical value associated in marketing research. Later with doctoral candidates and faculty members, Swazey[7] conducted another study in this area. In fact, to what extent researchers have well understood the importance of ethics in research have been conducted by some other studies too[8,9,10,11,12]. Another such study underscored the importance of moral values in research was by Swisher[13].

Bruhn[14] developed a typology of research misconduct in academia that can be implemented to judge the seriousness of misconduct. The severity could be confirmed by asking questions like: (a) Is the misconduct the fault of the researcher or is it due to organisational context? (b) Has the researcher committed such misconduct for the first time or in recurring ways? and (c) What are the consequences of this misconduct, for whom, for how many people and for which organisation, it has affected?

Helton-Fauth[15] by reviewing professional guidelines in the social, health, and biological science, identified 17 common dimensions of ethical concern involved in scientific work. They have grouped all these 17 dimensions into four major categories: "*Data management, Study conduct, Professional practices, and Business Practices*".

In another study, Sieber[16] classified ethical issues in research into five categories: (a) communication with research participants and communication, (b) research data acquisition and use, (c) external influence on research, (d) selection and use of research theories and method and (e) risk and benefit of research. The potentiality of breaches of ethical norms are mostly associated with few issues mentioned here.

As far as research ethics in social science and humanities are concerned, Israel and Hay[17] observed that social scientists are of the opinion that social research is being 'constrained and distorted' by ethical regulations and these regulations are driven by biomedical imperatives. However, Dingwall[18] highlights that biomedical model of ethical regulations applied in humanities and social science disciplines are similar in the sense that no major difference in harm is there between injecting potentially toxic chemicals in someone without permission and reversal emotional distress to someone.

Stenmark[19] discusses the ethical issues faced by academics and professionals in the Humanities. They used the qualitative data that were gathered through discussions and created a taxonomy that represents the structure of ethical issues in the Humanities which included: Professional Practices, Data Management, Study Conduct, Business Practices.

Drolet[20] used a descriptive phenomenological approach to document the ethical issues experienced by Canadian researchers, Research Ethics Board members, and research ethics experts. They highlighted several problematic elements and have identified ten ethical issues in an academic environment as: "(a) research integrity, (b) conflicts of interest, (c) respect for research participants, (d) lack of supervision and power imbalances, (e) individualism and performance, (f) inadequate ethical guidance, (g) social injustices, (h) distributive injustices, (i) epistemic injustices, and (j) ethical distress." Similarly, Carniel[21] explores the need of greater collaboration between humanities and social science researchers and Ethical Review Board (ERB) and commented that better collaboration will open opportunities for ERBs and researchers to engage and deliberate on the ethical dimension of research for establishing a better foundation for quality research.

3. OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of the research is to test the perception level of research scholars on various issues on research ethics. The specific objectives are:

- To know at what extent the research scholars of BHU are aware of the concept 'Research Ethics'
- To track the extent to which the methodological approaches proposed/followed by the researchers are ethically correct
- To identify at what extent research scholars are using AI tools like ChatGPT in research and for what reasons
- To evaluate how far can a scholar stay ethically strong while doing research

4. METHODOLOGY

To accomplish our job, first we have consulted a wide range of authoritative resources, including but not restricted only, ethics and guiding principles suggested by *European Commission, National Committee for Research Ethics*, Norway, as well as ethical guidelines recommended by *American Anthropological Association*, *American Psychological Association*, *International Sociological Association*, *Human Science Research Council* etc. and accordingly identified 14 units of meanings/issues associated with research ethics. These are: Honesty, Objectivity, Integrity/dignity, Competence, Openness, Respect for Intellectual Property/ Legality, Respect for Colleagues, Confidentiality, Responsible Publication, Social Responsibility, Non-Discrimination, Animal Care/ Human Subjects Protection, Scientific norms, Maintaining transparency/ Accuracy, Accountability. By incorporating

most of the common important issues, an open-ended questionnaire, online and offline both, has been prepared and transmitted to the research scholars of disciplines which come under social sciences (Soc Sci) and Arts & Humanities (A&H) of Banaras Hindu University. Researchers working beyond these disciplinary and epistemic boundaries were not our sample.

The total 2230 registered PhD scholars in Soc Sci. and A&H, questionnaires were distributed among 1000 scholars via online and physically. The rationale behind not to cover all population was the entire population was scattered and not accessible too, physically it was impossible to reach every member. It was felt really not justified to consume more resources and time too. Since a few researchers were only interested to send the answer online, both the mode was assumed appropriate. Out of selected population, 332 responses were received through online and offline mode. The response rate was above the standard sample size (i.e. 327) at 95 % confidence level with 5% margin of error (as suggested by Cochran[22]), we proceed further with these samples. Our sample was free from gender bias as we have chosen almost an equal number from each gender; discipline bias as we have chosen almost an equal number of samples from social sciences and arts & humanities and research level, as we have chosen almost an equal number of samples from first year research scholars, second year scholars and senior research scholars. The distribution of sample is mentioned below:

An open-ended question on: *What are the ethical issues in research* and *what they understand by the term 'Research Ethics'* was asked. Since the expression of the respondents were diverse in nature, we have applied machine test-train techniques of Stochastic Gradient Descent (SGD) model. Two datasets (dataset-1 and dataset-2) have been selected for this purpose; dataset-1 has x and y fields, with y field being trained on 80:20 ratio based on x field. The y-field contains the answers of the respondent and the fifteen broad issues that were identified by consulting various guidelines were used as x field in dataset 1 of SGD model. Dataset-2, which contains only x field, predicts y field based on the train dataset (dataset-1). The Jupyter Notebook's Numpy and Pandas libraries were used in backend. Subsequently, SGD classifier from the sklearn library was applied for the classification group, and Tfidf Vectorizer was used for text-to-numerical vectorisation. Stopword removal, punctuation removal, upper-to-lower case conversion, and other pre-processing tasks were carried out on both datasets. While classifying the answers of the respondents, a few answers (e.g. "*Research ethics is what ought to do and what not to do"*) of y-field was not as per the identified terms of x-field and these answers were classified under 'not-defined/non-specific'.

The socio-demographic questions asked through questionnaire were subject to qualitative analysis. The process proposed by Georgi[23] for a Husserlian phenomenological reduction was adopted. The questions pertained to research methodologies were aiming to evaluate adherence to ethical principles or potential violations thereof in research process. We evaluated these methodologies based on scenarios representing common ethical violations encountered in research, including informed consent, data handling, research integrity, ethical review, publication practices, transparency, supervision, guidance, individualism, and resource allocation disparities. Additionally, scholars were queried about their awareness and usage of the ChatGPT language model in their research endeavors. Questions were posed regarding their awareness of the tool and the purposes for which they leveraged its capabilities. All these answers were evaluated qualitatively. Furthermore, scholars were presented with a set of statements reflecting different ethical stances, and they were requested to specify their agreement or disagreement on a Likert scale. These efforts aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of scholars' ethical consciousness and the ethical considerations inherent in their research practices within the humanities and social sciences domains.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Perception About Research Ethics

The very first question was asked to evaluate to what extent the research scholars of BHU are aware of the concept 'Research Ethics'. The subject-wise distribution of respondents is showing in table 1.

Irrespective of disciplines, awareness level on ethical consideration in research is showing in table 2. As shown in table 2, researchers still perceived honesty (23 %), integrity/ dignity (18 %), responsible publication (10 %) are the top three issues under research ethics. There was a lack of awareness on ethical issues like

Table 1. Distribution of research scholars by subject, gender & level of research

Subjects	Researcher's level		Gender	
Arts & Humanities (n=177)	**JRF**	**SRF**	**M**	**F**
English & Foreign languages (incl. German, French, Chines, Linguistics etc.)	24	14	17	21
Indian & Vernacular languages (incl. Sanskrit, Bengali, Marathi, Hindi, Pali & Prakrit, Urdu etc.)	23	16	19	20
Artistic & Creative arts (incl. Dance, Visual Arts, Music etc.)	20	12	15	17
Professional/ Vocational subjects (incl. Physical Education Library Science, Journalism etc.)	21	13	19	15
Traditional subjects (Philosophy & Religion, History of Arts etc.)	22	12	18	16
Social sciences (incl. Psychology, Sociology, Education, Economics, History etc.) (n=155)	92	63	81	74

JRF: Junior Research Fellow (I & II Year), SRF= Senior Research Fellow (>2 Yrs)

Table 2. Awareness level on ethical consideration in research based on SGD model

Ethical considerations	A&H (n=172)	%Age	Sol sc (n=160)	%age	Overall % (n-332)
Honesty	47	27.33	31	19.38	23.49
Objectivity	7	4.07	13	8.13	6.02
Integrity, dignity	37	21.51	24	15.00	18.37
Competence	1	0.58	0	0.00	0.30
Openness	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00
Respect for intellectual property/ legality	1	0.58	6	3.75	2.11
Respect for colleagues	1	0.58	4	2.50	1.51
Confidentiality	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00
Responsible publication	16	9.30	18	11.25	10.24
Social responsibility	4	2.33	10	6.25	4.22
Non-discrimination	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00
Animal care/ Human subjects protection	2	1.16	7	4.38	2.71
Scientific norms	2	1.16	12	7.50	4.22
Maintaining transparency/ Accuracy	14	8.14	7	4.38	6.33
Accountability	3	1.74	7	4.38	2.11
Not defined/ Non-specific	37	21.51	21	13.13	17.47
	172	100.00	160	100.00	100.00

openness, informed consent, accountability etc. Although responsible publication is an issue that they feel comes under the purview of research ethics, however, issues like social responsibility, confidentiality, following scientific norms are not essential to them.

5.2 Methodological Breaches in Research

Next, the trickiest part, was to understand how research scholars of Soc Sci. and A&H of BHU accomplish their research work or what they observed about conduction of research by fellow researchers? Associated questions that were asked like: Are you familiar with the terms 'data fabrication and falsification'? Have you observed an incident that involved deliberately creating a set of observations that will produce a known result? Have you observed inclusion of dignified persons' names (with no contribution) in order to increase chances of acceptance of the paper? The answer of the question was asked in form of 'Yes' or 'No'. The results are show in table 3. The motto to ask all such questions was to judge what ethical breaches a researcher mostly committed/ witnessed in research.

Based on the answer ('Yes' or 'No'), it was seen the highest percentages i.e. 51.63 % in A&H and 43.48 % in Soc. Sci. admitted their ignorance of existing ethical guidelines like COPE, American Psychological Association's Guidelines etc, and they have not attended any training in this regard. This is followed by the practice adopted by the researchers for publishing articles in non-standard journals, applying various tricks for minimising highly-plagiarised academic contents (42 % in A&H and 37 % in Sol Sc.). A major portion of researchers (38 %), mainly in A&H, admitted that they breach the ethical process since they never take consent from the respondents nor do they have knowledge on how to take consent before collecting data.

5.3 ChatGPT in Research

The rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has created numerous opportunities as well as challenges. A new technology Large Language model-based Chat Generative Pre-Trained Transformer (ChatGPT) has heavily intruded in research and use of this tool in research writing is mostly explained as unethical[24,25]. One of the intensions of this research was to explore how far research scholars of social science and humanities are aware with the AI based ChatGPT tool and in what ways they are using such tools in research.

From the table 4, it is clear that, although not pre-dominantly, research scholars are using ChatGPT in research and, mostly scholars of social science background. Scholars of disciplines like Economics, Political Science, Library & Information Science, Philosophy, Physical Education come under this category. A major portion of scholars i.e. 46 % mentioned that they have knowledge on ChatGPT but they have not employed it in their research. These scholars are mostly from the disciplines like English, Vocal Music, Indian languages, Dance, Commerce etc. And the scholars who mentioned about their unawareness of ChatGPT are mostly from Sanskrit, Hindi, Pali & Prakrit, Bhojpuri etc. Another question was asked: What do you feel about the use of ChatGPT in research? One researcher answered "I wanted to see how the same paragraph is understood and redrafted by AI. It's a good technique to furnish your ideas and words more effectively", another scholar answered that "For generating Ideas. Generating questions from ideas. It helps in understanding the subject more", which may indicate the extent their awareness on AI in research. However, no one was mentioned the flaws like hallucination, fabrication, plagiarism with IPR

Table 3. Types of ethical glitches committed/witnessed

Ethical breaches	Percentage	
	A&H	Sol Sc
Informed Consent and Participant Protection (means: Lack of informed consent, failure to protect participants' privacy and confidentiality, inadequate consideration for participant welfare and safety)	38.21	18.02
Data handling and management (means: Unethical use of internet research and social media data, Collection of sensitive or personal data without appropriate consent or safeguards)	28.21	21.42
Research integrity (means: Plagiarism or academic dishonesty in research conduct, conflicts of interest affecting research integrity, bypassing peer-review process by submitting articles in sub-standard journals)	42.01	37.26
Publication and Dissemination Practices (means: Fabrication or manipulation of research findings, Unethical authorship practices, such as ghost writing or honorary authorship)	12.02	11.87
Transparency and Honesty (means: Lack of transparency in research procedures and objectives, Misrepresentation of research intentions or outcomes)	28.41	27.22
Lack of supervision and power imbalances (means: Student exploitation, neglect and unfulfilled promises, financial disparity and hardship, culture of exploitation and individualism)	9.21	10.75
Inadequate knowledge about ethical guidance (means: Unclear existing ethical guidance/standards, Lack of Access to Ethics Training)	51.63	43.48
Individualism and Performance (means: work overload, burnout, lack of work-life balance among researchers, Ethical Silence and Fear of Retribution, Pressure to Produce)	19.92	26.50
Resource Allocation Disparities (means: Inequitable Distribution of Resources, Knowledge on purposeful utilisation of funds, Epistemic injustices based on language use, age, gender, research design)	11.55	10.29

Note: At BHU, the fields like Physical Education, Library & Information Science, Geography, Journalism & Mass Communication come under Faculty of Arts.

contents etc. of using ChatGPT or AI, which shows their unawareness.

5.4 Ethical Stands of the Research Scholars

To evaluate ethical stands of research scholars, a set of questions were asked. Table 5 explains the percentage of responses in four-point Likert scale: strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree. The Likert scale assumes that the distance between each choice is equal.

Table 5 explains the opinion of respondents on various ethical stands they exhibit or principally accept or noticed on their fellow researchers. It is important to note that almost 36 % scholars agreed that either they or their fellow researchers engaged in the data falsification, fabrication or manipulation in research. However, they themselves believed to maintain honesty, fairness and integrity in research (52 %). For that, a major portion (54 %) would like to be proficient in their personal or professional fields and they are eager to acknowledge when they failed to meet the target. At the same time, a few of the total respondents also disagreed with all these ethical stands and a few more of them mentioned 'strongly disagree' with all these issues.

6. DISCUSSION

The present study analyses the perception of research scholars of Banaras Hindu University in the disciplines of social sciences and arts & humanities by collecting their opinions on various ethical issues. Given that BHU is a leading university in India offering a diverse array of subjects, it was possible to understand the perception of research scholars belonging to different disciplines.

Overall, the data shows that the scholars mostly considered 'honesty', 'integrity', 'dignity' as some of such aspects which come under the purview of ethical

Table 4. Extent of use of ChatGPT in academic research by research scholars

Used ChatGPT in Research	No. & %age	Purpose	No. & %age
Yes	114 (34.33%)	Review of Literature	43 (37.71%)
		Academic Writings	61 (53.50%)
		Paraphrasing	10 (8.77%)
No	153 (46.08%)		
Don't have Idea	65 (19.57%)		

Table 5. Opinion on ethical stands among researchers & their observation on fellow researchers

Ethical sands	1	2	3	4	NA
	(percentage of responses)				
To what extent you believe that data falsification, fabrication, and manipulation happen in academic research?	19.57	23.91	35.87	8.70	11.96
To what extent do you agree that acknowledging one's mistakes or errors holds significant importance for researchers?	6.52	11.96	38.04	43.48	0.00
To what extent do you agree that maintaining honesty, fairness, and integrity is important, even in disadvantageous conditions?	4.35	8.70	52.17	34.78	0.00
To what extent do you agree that other's professional expertise is necessary to admit in research?	4.35	17.39	54.35	22.83	1.09
To what extent do you agree to prioritize ethical behavior over gaining advantages in academic endeavours?	1.09	4.35	38.04	56.52	0.00
To what extent do you agree to uphold honesty in relationships and interactions, even if it means a disadvantage?	3.26	8.70	43.48	44.57	0.00
To what extent do you agree that accepting errors securitised by others is important?	5.43	15.22	53.26	26.09	0.00
To what extent do you agree that adhering to ethical or moral implications and considering the right course of action is needed?	3.26	11.96	40.22	44.57	0.00

1= strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree, NA= not answered

consideration in research. Their perception is limited and they are not well aware about the importance of legality, intellectual property, openness and respect of colleague aspects in research. The results of this study are persistent with an earlier study[26]. This may be because of the reason that in Indian universities, there is an absence of research ethics monitoring committee, while countries like Canada, Norway, and most of the countries of Europe, are conducting researches under the guidance of such committee. And members of the Research Ethics Board (REB) working in Canadian organisations are responsible for ethical assessment, monitoring and research compliance. Economics and Social Research Committee of European Union in their documentation identified the need of research ethics committee to serve as a gatekeeper on researches involving justified deception without participants valid and informed consent, covert research, potentially sensitive topics, conflict of region, vulnerable participants like children, sex workers, refugees etc. We particularly feel the need of constitution of such Board for a university like us. As we have seen, some of our respondents from the disciplines like physical education, sociology, political science are working on issues where 'informed consents' are necessary for collecting data. Few of them have mentioned the challenges of getting such consent and a major portion shows their unawareness in this regard. Provencher[27] have mentioned the challenges of getting informed consent while conducting study. Because of which when they submit their research articles to internationally reputed journals, their articles get desk-rejected immediately.

The research environment is intensely competitive and driven by performance. In order to obtain scholarship, or for upgradation from Junior to Senior Research Fellow, they need publications. This 'pressure to publish' has pushed them to opt various unethical practices like falsify research results and plagiarize text from colleague while writing articles. In both the disciplines, more than 35% researchers agreed that they committed or witness academic dishonesty in research conduct or bypassing peer-review process by submitting articles in sub-standard journals. Traditional peer-review often taking months to review. Researchers may choose to bypass it for publishing article more quickly to promote from Junior to Senior or to start financial support provided by the universities in research. Therefore, mandatory publication clause within a time-frame in research seems to birth unethical practice, as they mostly are unclear about existing ethical guidance/ standards, and they lack access to ethics training. While asking their publication profile of the research scholars in both the disciplines, it was observed that most of them have submitted/published their article in some journals that are of low repute in the field. These journals are not adhering to the peer-review process properly or they do not have stringent peer-review policy for accepting articles. Many researchers felt that the competitive environment pressured them into engaging in unethical behaviors, indicating a lack of integrity.

While posing a question like 'Have you encountered/ seen plagiarised work of your own/colleague and how you/he overcome the challenge of plagiarism?', some scholars answered that:

"*Plagiarism, for me, is cheating and being disrespectful to the other academicians*"

"*Basically intellectual robbery, Reoriented someone papers. Free plagiarism software helped*".

"*I saw one of my colleagues copied a major part of other's thesis and in the first instance his/her work showed 32 % similarity which (s)he overcame by using Quilbot".*

These comments may indicate that researchers are now frequently using various AI powered tools for improving the quality and efficiency by detecting errors, paraphrasing and expanding vocabulary. In this

sequence, an ethical issue then arises that how far the use of ChatGPT in research is ethical? We observed, of the total respondents, 34 % respondents are using/have used ChatGPT in research, mostly for academic writings followed by review of literature. The less use of Large Language Model (LLM) by the research scholars in the subjects like music, dance, vernacular languages etc. can be attributed that ChatGpt is yet to gain popularity in the artistic or creative content creation, genuine emotional insight or emotional essence[28]. Since these types of model is primarily text-based, intricacies involved in music and composition seems to beyond the capabilities of LLM. It is also unexpected that these types of model will function effectively for vernacular languages as training dataset of these languages are quite a few.

In the present technology-driven society, it may be unfair to expect that people will not use ChatGPT, although it is a questionable proposition in research[29]. However, as Elsevier[30] in all of their journal pages under 'Guideline to Authors' cautioned that "the technology must be applied with human oversight and control as AI can generate authoritative-sounding output than can be incorrect". The Committee on Publication Ethics[31] (COPE) also recommend that "Authors who use AI tools in the writing of a manuscript, production of images or graphical elements of the paper, or in the collection and analysis of data, must be transparent in disclosing in the Materials and Methods (or similar section) of the paper how the AI tool was used and which tool was used". In fact, ethical temptation correspond to a situation in which people are tempted to prioritize their own interests which governs their action[13]. Therefore, proper counselling of researchers is needed for governing their temptation in ethical ways. Ethical training must become mandatory for scholars in social sciences and arts & humanities. A regular training may help them to understand what side-effects are there for adopting unethical practices in research.

Examining the results on ethical stands, it was observed that most of researchers agreed to maintain honesty, fairness, and integrity, even when it could potentially disadvantage them. However, they individually witnessed data falsification, fabrication, and manipulation by their fellow members. This indicates unethical practices are existing in research. Therefore, role of supervisors/research guides in this regard is really important. The supervisor should ensure that a scholar is aware of his/her responsibility as a researcher, prior to conducting the research. The submitted proposal should be of appropriate quality and complete. They should also arrange training programmes to educate the scholars on basic ethical issues in research. Since majority of the respondents agreed to acknowledging their mistakes, the supervisor should advise students how various issues in research ethics should be addressed and if ethical approval is likely to be required, what action is needed. In this regard, it is essential that the university must revise their research ordinance to incorporate the guidelines on ethical issues during preparation of thesis, submitting research articles and overall research process.

7. CONCLUSION

The study was intended to explore the perception on research ethics among the research scholars of an academic institution in the disciplines of social sciences and humanities. The study found that the awareness level on research ethics is limited to only issues like research integrity, morality or honesty. Still scholars are unaware about the issues like conflict of interest, openness and confidentiality. We observed scholars of social sciences are better informed about 'informed consents, fabrication and manipulation of research data' etc., than humanities. The use of Large Language Model like ChatGPT was more prevalent among the research scholars of social sciences than disciplines under arts & humanities, vocal music, Indian languages, dance etc. Social science scholars are well aware about plagiarism and its effect on research but still their research process is not transparent to the ethical standards. Due to lack of standard guidelines, they are facing challenges for handling various ethical issues. We recommended, therefore, the establishment of a research ethics committee at the University level.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author acknowledges the financial support received from Malaviya Moolya Anusheelen Kendra, BHU, Varanasi for conducting this study.

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