



Research and publication at crossroads: exploring the catalysts of ethical misconducts of scholarly work

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ABSTRACT

Writing and publishing scientific and rigorous work needs a high level of integrity and adherence to ethical guidelines. Several publications have been rejected by authentic journals as a result of not adhering to a deontological standpoint. This laxity has posed deadly repercussions to the beholder including ruining its institutional image in academic scholarship. Notwithstanding, numerous writers are acquainted with the consequences of not observing ethical standards in research and publication, yet in trying to put up their pieces of work get caught in the same quandary. Anchored on a thematically oriented review of literature, it was imperative to try to explain the key ethical misconduct bases in research and publication. To fulfil this quest many journal articles were analysed. It was found that numerous aspects form the basis for misconduct in research and publication including; the pressure to 'publish or perish', the limitation of mentorship and guidance programs, knowledge on research and publication, promotion and academic advancement, competition among colleagues, workload pressure, financial motives, pressure from individual morality, and the challenge of research culture. Consequently, it is imperative to note that to publish a scholarly piece of work, adhering to ethical standards is non-negotiable.

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Introduction

Ethics is a strong foundation in the performance and operation of various global activities. The more ethical values are upheld, the broader goals are better realised. If the values are not followed then it directly affects the purpose of what was targeted to be accomplished. In the same way, conducting research around the world observes ethical principles which are scientifically set to ensure that research is productive in solving challenges in society based on the facts from research findings. The rigorous findings through observance of research ethics help researchers to provide valuable alternatives to policymakers that rely on scientific research (Mwita *et al.*, 2023). Pratt *et al.* (2019) claim misconduct in scholarly work is harmful as it threatens the general public welfare in addition to undermining public confidence in science. However, researchers argue whether criminalising the most serious forms of misconduct in research will add burdens for universities or will successfully increase research integrity, yet does not negate the significance of ethics in scholarly work (Bülow & Helgesson, 2019; Dal-Ré *et al.*, 2020). The awareness of scientific misconduct has been high in developed countries and it has been researched since the 1980s while in developing countries there are limited studies and in some countries, the topic has not yet been prominent in public debates, and there doesn't appear to be any convincing proof of a coordinated, national effort to address the issue of research misconduct (Rossouw *et al.*, 2014; Olesen *et al.*, 2018). This entails that scientific misconduct is not just a regional, or continental problem rather it is a global problem in the academic landscape.

Ethical misconduct is a serious issue that compromises the credibility of the scientific method in research and it has far-reaching detrimental impacts on academic institutions, staff, learners, and the scientific community (Resnik *et al.*, 2015; Arzmi, 2021).

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Abimbola et al. (2021) pointed out that academics work in a competitive environment and have to make sure their respectable universities are more competitive in research and publication activities. Despite the existing high pressure, the great focus for them should be on the observation of ethical guidelines which form the basis for research and ethical publication. Consequently, when the ethics are ignored, it undermines the reputation of the institution and the concerned researcher (Ugwu et al., 2023).

Ethics is the moral judgement between what is right and wrong. When it comes to research, ethics refers to the norms and values that guide decisions regarding the collection of data and analysis of said data, as well as the dissemination of findings (Gedutis et al., 2022; Mirza et al., 2023). Ethical standards include; honesty in reporting research results, fairness, objectivity, openness, trustworthiness, and respect for others. Scientific standards call for the application of these values in the context of research, and researchers must adhere to them (Arya, 2021). When these ethical standards are not complied with, it leads to research misconduct.

Ugwu et al. (2023) highlighted that to publish ethical research, adherence to research ethics must be maintained throughout the whole study process. Similarly, Lakhota (2022) emphasises it is the author's responsibility to follow ethical practices both during the submission of a research article for publication and after its publication. When a researcher adheres to ethical principles in the research from proposal development, data collection, data cleaning and analysis, interpretation, report writing, and findings dissemination, they may end up publishing ethical research and guaranteeing the validity or reliability of their results. Otherwise, the research results can be questionable.

More than ever, there is a temptation to publish work too soon, to misreport findings, or to publish false results; a situation that has been attributed to scientific misconduct in both developed and developing nations (Arya, 2021). Thus, the primary objective of this study was to respond to the question, "Why do ethical transgressions occur in scholarly work?".

Literature Review

Ethics in Research and Publication

Ethics includes the moral principle that governs a person's behaviour or the conduct of an activity (Roy & Rana, 2020). Ethics in research and publication refers to the set of scientific principles, ethical values, professional norms, and best practices that guide the action of the researcher while conducting research and seeking the publication of the research findings because researchers must make publicly available the results of their research on human subjects and are accountable for their accuracy and completeness of their reports (Roy & Rana, 2020; Chau et al., 2021). Pan (2020) recognised that breaches of ethical principles and values whether consciously or unconsciously in scientific writing and publication are due to existing pressure to publish among scholars. There is no doubt that publications, ethics, and research are closely dependent on one another (Roy & Rana, 2020). Similarly, providing accurate results of scientific work depends on the integrity of the researcher, the adherence to policies that guarantee an ethical approach at all times, as well as on strong institutional research governance protocols that guarantee that research design, conduct, analysis, and publication all adhere to an ethical framework (Pan, 2020). This indicates the higher ethical norms adhered to by community researchers will result in better research by adhering to scientific principles, which will also make publications more productive in advancing the profession and addressing societal concerns.

Meaning of Key Concepts

Research Misconduct

This is a breach of ethics that spans a broad range of offences that arise from proposal development, methodology, data collecting, analysis, reporting, and research findings presentation (Olesen et al., 2018). It is when the acceptable practices and ethical principles in scientific research are not considered during the research process. This includes data fraud (data falsification and fabrication of data), and plagiarism (Daroff, 2008; Wiwanitkit, 2017).

Publication Misconduct

This is a violation of scholarly and ethical conduct in scientific publications (Talwar & Aravind, 2021; Sachan et al., 2022). It is during the process of publishing a research report by seeking duplicate publication, unethical authorship by either providing gift authorship, and/or omitting researchers who deserve to be in the authorship, nondisclosure of conflicts of interest, copyright violations, and duplicate publications.

The Wakefield MMR-AUTISM Case

The case shows ethical misconduct exists when the unreported conflicts of interest between a principal investigator and the organisation providing funds for research might have significant consequences that go well beyond the parameters of the study. In the MMR-autism case, Andrew Wakefield had undisclosed monetary conflicts of interest and was found to have violated human subjects' protection rules in research underlying an article published in the *Lancet* (Boseley, 2017). The investigation conducted by the *British Medical Journal* found Wakefield also falsified data (Godlee et al., 2011). A journalist Brian Deer reported that Wakefield had altered numerous facts about the patient's medical histories to support his claim to have identified a new syndrome, for monetary gain. Further uncovering the possibility of research fraud revealed the unethical treatment of children, and Wakefield's conflict of interest through his involvement with a lawsuit against manufacturers of the MMR vaccine. Further, it was found that out of 12 cases

published in the 1998 Lancet paper, all cases were misrepresented or concealed, and the medical records could not be reconciled with the published histories, diagnoses, or descriptions. This caused an investigation into the previous publications and retractions of his works. The retractions statement cites the GMC findings, indicating patients were not consecutively referred in data collection and the study did not have ethical approval. Thus, the occurrence of misconduct in research and publication disrupts the belief people have in science and leaves the door open for such conduct unless it is resolved in any way possible for good through understanding their causes.

Types of ethical misconducts

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is an act of using someone else's words/texts, ideas, processes, or results without proper acknowledgment (Olesen *et al.*, 2018; Arya, 2021; Arzmi, 2021; Chau *et al.*, 2021; Ugwu *et al.*, 2023; Mwita, 2022). Academic crime is not tolerable. When it is tolerated it attracts more ethical misconduct in research. Most researchers have been engaged in this kind of trap whether intentionally or unintentionally. Olesen *et al.* (2018); and Awasthi, (2019) argue there is no evidence to suggest that pressure nor the availability of internet facilities have increased the incidences of plagiarism, while Arya, (2021) argues differently that the existing misconduct in research among young scientists is due to information available on internet. Furthermore, Ugwu *et al.*, (2023) identifies there are two main types of plagiarism; (a) 'Clear Plagiarism' whereby the author assumes a large portion of text or data and presents it as his or her data and (b) 'Minor Plagiarism' whereby the author may copy short phrases only. Mondal (2022) identified four types of plagiarism. Firstly, direct plagiarism whereby a portion of someone's writing is copied word by word. Secondly, self-plagiarism whereby the researcher presents his or her own previously published data. Thirdly, accidental plagiarism when a researcher does not cite their sources or misquotes the original text. Fourthly, mosaic plagiarism is when a researcher uses someone's writing without the use or proper use of quotation marks. Lakhota, (2022) adds that mosaic plagiarism is sometimes known as patchwork plagiarism where a researcher may copy and paste some sentences from published work by another author without enclosing it in quotation marks. Further, replication plagiarism, idea plagiarism, and translational plagiarism have also been identified (Lakhota, 2022). The literature identified measures that have been taken such as the introduction of software to detect plagiarism, disciplinary actions and penalties for plagiarism (some teaching institutions), and the creation and performance of institutional policy and procedures (Stabingis *et al.*, 2014). The identified measure seems to be helpful, however plagiarism is still appearing in the existing era of technology. This is due to the intercultural differences among researchers which cause divergent perspectives among authors on what plagiarism entails and contribute to unethical practices of various scholarly works.

Data frauds

This includes data falsification and data fabrication. Falsification is when data are modified to generate favourable results that are inaccurate (Sachan *et al.*, 2022). This is the modification of research materials such as changing, omitting, or replacing the data to improve the results, which no longer represent the original data set. Fabrication is when a researcher manipulates the original data and presents it as two different data sets (Olesen *et al.*, 2018; Roy & Rana, 2020; Arzmi, 2021; Chau *et al.*, 2021). This includes either making up results or altering the results of experiments. Literature shows data fabrication and data falsification do qualify as misconduct when proper data analysis is not considered to be crucial (Dal-Ré *et al.*, 2020; Ugwu *et al.*, 2023). Researcher manipulates the research process, data, or findings to obtain results that are similar to or congruent with earlier published study papers, and any other personal reasons can lead researchers to manipulate and falsify data. Researchers are advised to present data as collected and use the statistical method for the missing data and should not assume the missing data to reduce data fraud as ethical misconduct in research.

Unethical Authorship

There has been a large wave of people appearing as authors of various articles when they have not been involved in any process of preparing the article. Literature shows, "*Policies at most scientific journals state that a person should be listed as the author of a paper only if that person made a direct and substantial intellectual contribution to the design of the research, the interpretation of the data, or the drafting of the paper*" (Resnik *et al.*, 2015; Arya, 2021; Gedutis *et al.*, 2022). Lobbying or begging your name to appear in someone's work without intellectual contribution is misconduct and should be considered as an academic curse that researchers should avoid. There are three forms of unethical authorship including; Ghost authorship, gifted authorship, and guest authoring which are the bases for authorship misconduct.

Duplicate submission

This includes the submission of one academic paper in more than one journal for publication or the submission of the published work in another journal for publication in either the same or another language. The author may already publish the entire work in one journal and submit part of it in another journal. This highlighted by Casadevall & Fang, (2012); Olesen *et al.* (2018) who argue that the contemporary emphasis on researchers accumulating a large number of publications to demonstrate their reputation, together with the winner-takes-all nature of research funding, may also be contributing factors to the rise in research misconduct.

Conflict of interest

This is the result of researchers having hidden interests that could skew their assessments of published work. This has been shown by Jenn (2006); Ugwu *et al* (2023) who highlighted conflicts include personal, commercial, social, political, academic, or financial interests that directly or indirectly impact the author's actions about a certain manuscript. Additionally, Campos-Varela & Ruano-Raviña, (2019) insisted the undisclosed conflict of interest can attract rejection of the research article from publication. This implies researchers should declare if there is a conflict of interest or not to meet ethical requirements for research and publication.

Peer review misconduct

Peer reviewers and editors are susceptible to misconduct, whether intentional or inadvertent (Lakhotia, 2022; Sachan *et al.*, 2022). There are different categories for peer review including; single-blinded whereby the reviewer's identity is unknown to the author, double-blinded whereby the authors and reviewers are blinded to each other, and open peer review where both are aware of one another. In the case where the reviewer is aware of the author or vice versa. misconduct can occur because it demonstrates the conflict of interest as the reviewer may give positive/negative comments due to the existing relationships. The reviewer may disclose confidential information for financial gain from the author. Further, Sachan *et al.*, (2022) cement it is also misconduct for reviewers to reject an article to publish their related work and delay the publication of competing work.

Acknowledgment

This is a way of appreciating someone's contribution/support/ assistance in conducting academic work. Most researchers/academics think giving credit where credit is due is a weakness while it is not. Acknowledging people shows you are grateful for someone's role in making the work possible. This can be in ideas, doing some part of our research such as proofreading before submission, analysing data, giving comments, supervision, or any other activity to make our work better. This is why some academic journal policies require authors to fill the part for acknowledgement before publication because it is the ethical standard that has to be observed when we want to publish our articles.

Interventions for Ethical Misconduct

The increase in ethical misconduct in scholarly work has attracted several interventions and programs to ensure ethical conduct while conducting research and publication. These include; integrity training on plagiarism, authorship, research fraud, and publication, both face-to-face and online (Marusic *et al.*, 2013). Literature suggests ethical training is an effective way for knowledge acquisition in reducing malpractices in academic settings. However, Marusic *et al.*, (2013). argue "*there is limited evidence that various methods of training in research integrity had some effects on participants' attitudes to ethical issues but minimal*". Another intervention is the application of plagiarism check software. For instance, the introduction of Turnitin software for plagiarism-checking has a significant contribution to detecting copied text or similarities of work. However, the fact that the tolerable percentage of plagiarism in most university policies is below 30% seems to encourage plagiarism at a certain point and give loopholes for misconduct in research. Furthermore, *research ethical committees* speed up ethical adherence whereby the ethical review board (ERB), ethical review committee (ERC), human research ethics committee (HREC), and institutional review board (IRB) undertake the ethical review of research protocols involving humans, applying agreed ethical principles (Shitindo *et al.*, 2022). The existence of more ethical misconduct in scholarly work indicates the identified interventions may not be effective enough to limit ethical misconduct if the factors causing ethical misconduct in scholarly work are ignored. Therefore, this shows it is important to understand the causes to introduce proper interventions to mitigate ethical misconduct in research and publication.

Methodology

The systematic literature review was used to collect the needed data from different journal articles. Articles were searched from *ResearchGate* and *Google Scholar* databases using keywords like unethical practice, publication misconduct, research misconduct, and scientific misconduct. A total of 49 articles were obtained from these databases. The abstracts of the obtained publications were read whereby a total of 26 articles published between 2018 and 2024 were considered as deemed relevant to the study topic and further included for analysis while 23 were excluded. The literature demonstrates there has been a significant rise in the number of cases involving ethical principles violations between 2018 and 2024. Thus, this period was taken into account for the review. The study's language (the use of the English language) and justification for why ethical misconduct occurs in scholarly work were the main inclusion criteria. Articles with no clear justification as to why ethical misconducts emerge in scholarly work and those that used other languages than English were excluded.

Results and Discussions

Based on the analysis conducted by this study the following are the factors influencing ethical misconduct in research and publication. A summary of the factors and the relevant authors are provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of the factors influencing misconduct in research and publication of scholarly work

S/N	Factors	Authors
1	The pressure of 'publish or perish'	Olesen <i>et al.</i> , (2018); Maggio <i>et al.</i> , (2019); Holtfreter <i>et al.</i> , (2019); Ahuja, (2020); Arzmi, (2021); Paruzel-Czachura <i>et al.</i> , (2021); Mondal, (2022); Gopalakrishna <i>et al.</i> , (2022); Ugwu <i>et al.</i> , (2023); Brown & Lund, (2024)
2	Lack of mentorship and guidance	Wiwanitkit, (2017); Arya, (2021); Gopalakrishna <i>et al.</i> , (2022); Lal & Sharma, (2023)
3	Lack of awareness of research and publication ethics	Olesen <i>et al.</i> , (2018); Singh <i>et al.</i> , (2018); Roy & Rana, (2020); Ahuja, (2020); Lal & Sharma, (2023); Ugwu <i>et al.</i> , (2023); Brown & Lund, (2024)
4	Promotion and Academic advancement	Singh <i>et al.</i> , (2018); Ahuja, (2020); Yu <i>et al.</i> , (2021) Mondal, (2022); Ugwu <i>et al.</i> , (2023); Lal & Sharma, (2023)
5	Competition among colleagues	Ahuja, (2020); Tourish & Craig, (2020); Mondal, (2022); Gopalakrishna <i>et al.</i> , (2022); Ugwu <i>et al.</i> , (2023)
6	Workload pressure	Hewett, (2022); Gopalakrishna <i>et al.</i> , (2022)
7	Financial motives	Olesen <i>et al.</i> , (2018); Holtfreter <i>et al.</i> , (2019); Gopalakrishna <i>et al.</i> , (2022); Mondal, (2022); Ugwu <i>et al.</i> , (2023); Lal & Sharma, (2023)
8	Pressure from individual morality	Paruzel-Czachura <i>et al.</i> , (2021); Yu <i>et al.</i> , (2021); Mondal, (2022); Ugwu <i>et al.</i> , (2023);
9	Poor research culture	Olesen <i>et al.</i> , (2018); Singh <i>et al.</i> , (2018); Lal & Sharma, (2023)

Source: Literature Review

Lack of awareness about research and publication ethics

The level of awareness among researchers on research and publication ethics is still questionable due to the increase of misconduct in research and publication. This is supported by Sachan *et al.* (2022) who argue that the existing misconduct is due to the lack of awareness about ethical practices known as good publication practices. Similarly, Singh *et al.* (2018); Lal & Sharma, (2023) argued that lack of awareness is due to the limited education and training on research ethics which makes researchers not aware of the ethical guidelines, principles, and best practices. Further, Olesen *et al.*, (2018); Roy & Rana, (2020); Brown & Lund, (2024) suggest a person may overcome scientific misconduct if they have a solid knowledge of ethics; if they don't, it might lead to unethical practices such as plagiarism, falsification, and fabrication of data. This implies that understanding ethical principles about research and publication to researchers is more important in limiting unethical conduct in research and publication.

The Pressure of Publish or Perish

Any person working in an academic setting must publish to be qualified to oversee, instruct, and carry out academic duties. Without conducting research and having the ability to publish, no member of the academic staff could make it through their career (Olesen *et al.*, 2018; Arzmi, 2021; Paruzel-Czachura *et al.*, 2021). A hostile work atmosphere is created by the current strain on whether one should publish to survive in academic life or not to die academically (Olesen *et al.*, 2018). On the other hand, studies Holtfreter *et al.*, (2019); Maggio *et al.*, (2019); Ahuja, (2020); Mondal, (2022); Gopalakrishna *et al.*, (2022); Ugwu *et al.*, (2023) and Brown & Lund, (2024) mentioned that publication pressure emerged as the strongest individual predictor of misconduct in the academic career need to prosper. This implies a desire to prosper within the field of academia and maintain Professional Supremacy increases the possibility for one to violate scientific research standards due to the fear of perishing and finding oneself in a trap of violating ethical principles of doing research and publication as a result of ethical misconduct. In the modern academic world, a scholar may publish but they may still perish if they neglect the ethical aspects of preparing their work.

Lack of mentorship and guidance

A good mentor is one who always thinks for the betterment of the mentee imbibing ethics in them (Wiwanitkit, 2017; Lal & Sharma, 2023). Research and article publishing ethics are being violated more frequently as a result of academic institutions' lack of meaningful mentorship programs. All European Academies, (2021) shows the majority of new researchers nowadays are tempted to publish quickly, interpreting the data incorrectly or publishing false results. However, ethical misconduct in the academic arena is disastrous for people of all ages, not just the youngest researcher and it is done by even senior academic staff members (Gopalakrishna *et al.*, 2022). This is because institutional guidelines are very complex in nature, the scientists/researchers and students do not get the best guidance from their research supervisors and or their mentors. Hence, it influences the divergence from the ethical package in conducting research as a result of publishing standards-defying articles which keep attracting misconduct in research and publication. For instance, the senior academic members in universities assume current young researchers are not smart enough compared to those of their generation, such thought may affect the mentorship process. The academic institution has to create guidelines and mentorship

programs that will provide students and junior researchers with workable direction when conducting research and publishing, using scientific standards and ethics as a foundation for both. Otherwise, there will be plenty of mediocre academic members in academic settings.

Financial motives

This may be the case when individuals need to meet the requirements made by funders for authors to secure funds. Similarly, Ahuja, (2020); Mondal, (2022); Ugwu *et al.*, (2023) have pointed financial motives to be a reason for the breach of ethics in research and publication. This is based on the established criteria's need to be adhered to by authors whereby publications are one of them. This strain may encourage dishonest behaviour such as data manipulation, result fabrication, or other transgressions to live up to the expectations of securing funds. Furthermore, Holtfreter *et al.*, (2019); Gopalakrishna *et al.*, (2022) have pinpointed that pressure to secure external funds among individuals directly affects individual behaviour to engage in research and publication misconduct. Further, Olesen *et al.*, (2018) extend that the pressure is higher nowadays due to limited sources of research funds and fewer academic positions available in universities. For instance, the Wakefield MMR-AUTISM Case highlighted the consequence of the conflict of interest to the principal investigator who failed to declare it for financial gain. Therefore, authors compromise integrity in research as well as in publication due to the pressure of publication to suit self-needs and the funders.

Promotion and Academic Advancement pressure

Enhancing one's reputation, improving one's chances of tenure or promotion, or being recognized in one's profession are all possible goals for researchers. Yu *et al.*, (2021) argued the existing pressure for promotion and academic advancement has pushed the occurrence of research misconduct and publication, as a researcher may selectively disclose results, plagiarism, duplicate publications, and many more to influence their professional growth and recognition as well as promotion. Similarly, Singh *et al.*, (2018) showed misconduct dominates in research and publications as individuals need to satisfy their gains including; salaries, status, and authority. For instance, academic ranking depends on the number of publications made by the academic member to accumulate points for the new position. That pushes people to seek higher ranks while violating ethical integrity and performing misconduct. This implies selfishness as human nature frequently increases the likelihood of misconduct in research and publication to maximise self-gains.

Poor research culture

Research misconduct is the result of poor research culture. Lal & Sharma, (2023) cemented that certain cultures and practices found in higher education institutions have been developed and put into place with the organisation's best interests in mind. However, Singh *et al.*, (2018) argue the lack of monitoring and control culture on how to conduct research and where to publish among universities has increased the occurrence of malpractices in research and publication. In the same way, Olesen *et al.* (2018) agreed that infective research culture in universities indicates the collapse of the community that depends on the body of knowledge resulting from research and publication. For instance, the existence of internal research grants encourages researchers to maximise opportunities for research activities, while the absence of internal research grants limits the research culture in universities. Therefore, Higher Education Institutions without effective research culture to support researchers in writing may become targets for data fabrication, data falsification, and data or idea theft, which violates ethical standards as a result of research misconduct and publication malpractice to persist (Mwita *et al.*, 2023b).

Workload Pressure

The work pressure can have a significant impact on research misconduct and publication. This has been shown by Gopalakrishna *et al.*, (2022) who highlighted the fixed timeframe for intended quick results and deadlines associated with workloads creating a loop for misbehaviors such as fabricating data and rushing through improper experiments without scientific validation. On the other hand, Hewett, (2022) agreed academic staff members have a terrible work environment because of their enormous workloads. For instance, academics are involved in teaching, consultancy, and research activities (submission of articles, book chapters, research projects, etc), and other administrative duties, in which they are required to adhere to deadlines for each work assigned. Things that make it possible for academics to breach and manipulate ethical norms to support their research and publication agenda and to meet workload deadlines even when it costs ethical practices. This denotes that excessive workload among academic staff attracts shortcuts and diverges from ethical observation in conducting research.

Competition among Colleagues

Competition in academics is inevitable when it is positively perceived to promote growth among researchers (Gopalakrishna *et al.*, 2022). In the study of Tourish & Craig, (2020) argue academics view publishing as a game wherein publication is primarily valued for their hits on resumes, which incite competition among peers to gain academic prestige and financial benefits. In particular, when it comes to funding opportunities, professional promotion, and job hunting, most researchers are afraid of falling behind their peers. To keep up with their peers, they may resort to unethical means such as plagiarism, data falsification, duplicate publication, and insufficient study. This implies as competition among researchers increases, so do instances of violating scientific principles in research and publication, as individuals strive to keep pace with their colleagues.

Pressure from individual morality

Some researchers may feel compelled by personal ethics to come to a given conclusion or yield a particular set of results, which may push them to participate in dubious activities like data manipulation or selective reporting to support their preferred conclusions or moral convictions. Similarly, Yu *et al.*, (2021); Paruzel-Czachura *et al.*, (2021) findings show individual morality influences dilemmas and academic misconduct when research findings are contrary to the researcher's moral convictions. On the other hand, Mondal, (2022); Ugwu *et al.*, (2023) claim individual morality acts as the basis for researchers to enhance ethics in research and publication. For instance, religious believers tend to contradict scientific research, researchers may alter results to favour their beliefs which are built on religious assumptions. Thus, researchers should always consider ethical principles despite the existing pressures from individual morality otherwise they may end up diluting findings to attract results that are in line with their moral beliefs.

Conclusions

The paper intended to provide answers to the question, “*Why do ethical transgressions occur in scholarly work?*”. In addressing that question the study identified nine (9) factors that influence the violation or breaches of ethical principles in the whole research process up to publication of scholarly work. These factors include; the pressure to publish or perish, lack of mentorship and guidance, lack of awareness of research and publication ethics, promotion and academic advancement, competition among colleagues, workload pressure, financial motives, pressure from individual morality, and poor research culture. This implies the occurrence of misconduct in research and publication is due to the combination of the aforementioned factors. Thus, researchers should be aware of such factors to reduce the likelihood of misconduct occurring in the research and publication processes.

Additionally, scientific procedures and ethical principles in the research process and publication should be adhered to for quality research and publications. To maintain the integrity of scholarly work, academic communities, and institutions need to make sure that there is an appropriate ethical culture to provide timely ethical training and programs to researchers. Furthermore, there is a need for a joint integrity committee among universities, funding agencies, and other stakeholders to ensure effective collaboration toward the governance of research integrity. Such committees will ensure there are mutual policies and guidelines on research integrity and foster consistent application of ethical standards across the institutions and researchers. This can then ensure the legitimacy of scholarly work and deter any methods that might encourage dishonest behaviour in the conduct and dissemination of scholarly work.

The study suggests to ensure robust research integrity, the existing policies need to be adjusted to accommodate the current changes in information flow and Artificial Intelligence to smooth research practices, data management, and reporting standards.

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