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## **Ethical Dilemmas: A Perspective of Research Students of Malakand University**

Hijab Tahir (Corresponding Author)

M.phil Scholar, Education Department, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Email: [kanhijabo28@gmail.com](mailto:kanhijabo28@gmail.com)

Dr Samreen Mehmood

Assistant professor Education Department, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Email: [samreen@awkum.edu.pk](mailto:samreen@awkum.edu.pk)

Dr Abdul Ghaffar

Associate Professor Education Department, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Email: [abdulghafar@awkum.edu.pk](mailto:abdulghafar@awkum.edu.pk)

### **Abstract**

This study explored “Ethical Dilemmas in Research: A Case Study of University Students” The objective of the study were to explore To investigate the situations in which scholars face ethical dilemmas related to their research work; The population of the study was university of Malakand. A purposive sampling technique was employed to choose a sample of 11 Mphil scholars. In depth interviews according to the need of the study were conduct to collect data from 11 scholars. The data was analyzed by thematic analysis to interpret the result. The result was attained via the main challenge which the researcher faced in ethical dilemmas in research is lack of awareness of giving the informed consent before conducting an interview. These findings are a nice addition to the knowledge in the field of education. It is recommended that the Government and non-governmental organizations may spread awareness through various social media platforms that conduct research study on anything needs to be crystal clear and transparent from all the cheating tools.

Keywords: ethical dilemmas, research, research scholars

### **Introduction**

To guarantee that research projects are completed on schedule without sacrificing the caliber of the product, it is crucial that supervisors and their research researchers establish positive relationships. Thus, the goal of the current study was to investigate the dynamics of relationships between research scholars and their supervisors. The relationship between students and supervisors is crucial to the success of research initiatives. The success of postgraduate study is significantly influenced by the caliber of research supervision. To help students organize their study and create proper research procedures, supervisors offer counsel and direction. They give students feedback on their progress, help them hone their research abilities, and help them stay on course to advance their knowledge in a certain field. A market economy that values speed and productivity over quality or rigor, limited access to research funds, and continuously rising demands (such productivity and timeliness) characterize the highly competitive environment in which university research is



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performed. All these elements work together to foster an atmosphere that is conducive to research misconduct, including research misbehavior or misconduct (i.e., conduct that is inappropriate or unethical because it violates the accepted norms of responsible research conduct or compromises the observance of basic ethical principles that are widely accepted by the research community).

### **Objectives**

To investigate the situations in which scholars face ethical dilemmas related to their research work.

### **Statement of Problems**

Even with the increased use of technology and awareness of ethical guidelines, graduate-level researchers continue to encounter numerous challenges. Problems with bias, plagiarism, data confidentiality, and research ethics. The goal of the current study is to investigate ethical challenges specifically for MPhil students at the University of Malakand by looking at various elements and determining methods and approaches to deal with them.

### **Significance of Study**

All individuals who are currently conducting research and eventually could participate in the process will find this study to be a very valuable insight. The supervisor will gain understanding regarding the moral conundrums that the research scholars encounter

### **Literature Review**

Zoysa (2008) discovered that a lack of supervisory support was one of the several reasons why some students left their programs.

According to Allen and Eby (2007), a mentor is a teacher, supervisor, counselor, or skilled developer who assists others in achieving their ideal lives.

The researcher's subjective interpretation of the data and findings, the researcher-participant relationship, and the chosen research design are the three main obstacles that researchers conducting qualitative studies must overcome in order to address ethical issues in data collection (Beauchemin et al., 2021). Creating two or more ethically sound alternative options is the first step in resolving ethical difficulties in decision-making. Reaching a conclusion and reacting to

Teaching is a lifetime profession that requires you to make wise choices and judgments in difficult and uncertain circumstances. Teachers put a lot of effort into handling the extremely complicated problems with people's limited mental abilities (Riedler & Eryaman, 2016). Teachers usually make reasonable decisions rather than rational ones (Borko & Shavelson, 2013). Ethics originated from the metaphysical investigation of the moral life in ancient Greece (Kelley, 2015).

According to Martin Buber, one of the primary theorists of the Hitt classification of personal ethical systems, human awareness—the capacity to discriminate between right and wrong—is what constitutes a personal ethical system.

Another document reveals an amazing approach of ethical dilemmas as “concern for women”. Ethical consideration not typically in the foreground of most objective research”



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Finding two or more ethically sound alternative solutions is the definition of confronting an ethical dilemma during the decision-making process, as demonstrated by a troublesome circumstance for the teacher.

Class size, class culture, testing regulations, and disciplinary procedures are some of the circumstances that lead to ethical quandaries since centralized curricula are not appropriate for individualized instruction. Other situations that lead to moral dilemmas include adhering to regulations established by the school or administration; balancing democratic and social principles; and showing empathy for coworkers, parents, and students (Riedler & Eryaman, 2016). A few examples of situations that create ethical dilemmas because they are inappropriate for individualized education are the centralized curriculum, the testing program, the disciplinary procedure, the class size, and the classroom culture. Other situations that result in The "new" social studies of childhood and children are still in their infancy and need a lot of work to be done at many levels, according to a review of ethical dilemmas in studying children and teenagers regarding their social contexts (Mayall 2002). A strong justification must be made for every scientific study involving human subjects, participants must be fully informed of all study risks, benefits, and implications, and their agreement must be given freely and voluntarily without force or manipulation. It is crucial to maintain anonymity and repair occasional harm (Webster et al., 2014). In a conundrum, the decision is neither right nor wrong. It entails choosing and handling situations where one or more performances are suitable (Jacobs & Hartshorne, 2003).

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

Keeping in mind the current nature of the study the qualitative in nature interview type research design was used. As we know that selection of research design depends on the nature of the problem. The nature of this study was qualitative research design. Qualitative research is the process of collection, analysis and interpretation of comprehensive narrative visual data to gain insight into a particular phenomenon of interest( Gay, Mills,& Airasian,2023)the process of designing case study research involves determining the research question, defining the case, determine the role of development in a case selection, determine the conceptual and theoretical frame work for the case study and deciding the whether a single case study, multiple case study or collective case study is appropriate(L.R Gay, Mills & Airasian,2023)

#### **Setting of the study**

The study was case study and conducted at the university of Malakand, Lower Dir, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa



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### **Sample of the study**

According to Gravetter and Forzana (2009), a sample is a group of individuals selected from a population to represent that population in a research study. In this study, purposive sampling was applied. The deliberate selection of research participants who have firsthand knowledge of the subject under study is known as purposeful sampling (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). University students were chosen to participate in this study based on their experiences with ethical dilemmas in research.

Snowball sampling was also employed. This occurs when study participants suggest to the researcher other volunteers who fit the criteria (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). As a result, participants were asked if they were aware of any other college students who had faced similar moral conundrums while conducting research.

### **Data Collection**

Individual interviews served as the study's main method of data collection, and research is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis in qualitative research (Anderson, 2017; Bevan, 2014). To ensure consistency, an interview process was developed to guide each interview (Anderson, 2017; Bevan, 2014; Boddy, 2016). The interview questions were written objectively, making sure they were open-ended and free of assumptions or leading language, in accordance with Yardley's (2017) and Van Manen's (2017) recommendations.

### **Data Analysis**

The researcher used thematic analysis techniques for data analysis, which is an approachable, adaptable, and growingly popular method of qualitative data analysis.

The study's analysis was conducted using the Braun and Clarke (2006) method. For this purpose, the following six steps were followed such as (1) familiarity (2) generating codes (3) searching for themes (4) reviewing the themes (5) naming the themes (6) reporting the results.

### **Data analysis**

Creswell & Creswell state that "qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (2018, p. 4). In qualitative research, data analysis was defined as "the process of giving the mass of collected data order, structure, and meaning." The process is messy, unclear, creative, time-consuming, and fascinating. It is not nice; it doesn't go in a straight line (Marshall & Rossman)

### **Theme 1: Informed consent**

Most of the respondents show their concern about giving informed consent to the participant before getting any sort of interview. Such as respondent 1 mentioned that:

*To ensure comprehensive and understandable consent for complex research, use simple language, avoid jargon, and provide detailed descriptions of the study's goals, techniques, risks, rewards, and participant rights. Utilize Q&A sessions, summaries, and visual aids to clarify information and ensure participants understand.*



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Similarly, respondent 2 also said that:

*Facial recognition technology, while beneficial in security, raises ethical concerns about privacy, surveillance, and misuse by authoritarian regimes. Researchers must balance innovation with ethical responsibility to mitigate bias.*

Respondent 3 as well 4 have also clearly mentioned that giving consent is very important such as:

*Sometimes they do not care about informed consent violations, which is the biggest issue during data collection.*

Likewise, it is also pointed by respondent 5 that:

*I ensure that participants provide informed consent, maintain their confidentiality, and use their data responsibly*

Similarly, respondent 6 also said that:

*The process of informed consent seems to be totally ignored by most of the researchers. I think they do not consider it as a part of the research*

### **Theme 2: Confidentiality**

The second theme which emerged through thematic analysis stated as “Confidentiality”. All the respondents show their concern about keeping things confidential, especially when it comes to someone’s personal life. Some of the views are

Respondent 4 mentioned that:

*Participants' personal information remains confidential and protected by researcher, Supervisor and all other stakeholders.*

Respondent 6 pointed that.

*The biggest ethical issue in research, especially in the phase of data collection, is knowing what to keep confidential. Many researchers do not know about this*

Respondent 7 also said that:

*I always try to keep the collected data only to myself and not to share even with my supervisor when it is concern about female or any other family issues.*

Respondent 8 also said that:

*I ensure that participants provide informed consent, maintain their confidentiality, and use their data responsibly.*

Respondent 10 also pointed that:

*When the data collected is not secure it leads to misuse and creates so many problems*

### **Theme 3: Ethical and moral consideration**

Ethical and moral consideration is another theme which emerged through thematic analysis. Mostly the participants of the study strongly mentioned the importance of ethical and moral aspects of the research.

Respondent 1 said that

*There are various ethical problems which I have faced during data collection were Transparency and open communication, accessible language, Regular ethical reviews and consultations.*

Similarly, Respondent 4 mentioned that:

*Confidential personal data, preserving confidentiality, and ethical norms in*



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*my research are the problems I have faced.*

Respondent 6 also said that

*It raises significant ethical concerns regarding privacy, surveillance, and potential misuse by authoritarian regimes.*

Respondent 9 also said that

*Problems faced by Co-victims of homicide. revenge or i felt more like i am making my respondent even more sad*

Respondent 10 also pointed that

*especially female respondent Yes, early married girl do not share their problems to male researchers.*

### **Findings**

In the light of the responses of participants, the data analysis formed the themes from which the researcher has reached the following findings.

- 1) The researcher found that the main challenge which the researcher faced in ethical dilemmas in research is lack of awareness of giving the informed consent before conducting an interview.
- 2) The second finding of this research study was lack of confidentiality in the researchers regarding the collected data.
- 3) In the light of these subjects, the researcher also found that not understanding the importance of ethical and moral considerations is also one of the dilemmas in research studies.

### **Conclusion**

- 1) From the above findings of this research study, the following conclusion can be drawn: In the light of the findings the researcher concluded that researchers are mostly not aware of the protocols of conducting an interview for data collection. Usually, they do not give informed consent to the participants.
- 2) The researcher also reached the conclusion that mostly when researchers collected the data for any research study, they often forget the ethical and moral considerations of the research which leads to different issues.
- 3) The researcher also concluded that most researchers are unable to keep things secret and confidential. They do not know what to share and what not to share.

### **Discussion**

The study was about the “ethical dilemmas faced by researchers among the researchers in universities”. The foremost application was exploring the dilemmas that challenge the researchers. Mostly researchers face a lot of challenges throughout their journey of any research studies. To make it to the decent outcomes the researchers of the university have complicated in this study and information has been composed from them in the form of discussions which were carefully chosen purposively by the researcher. A sequence of queries was asked by the researchers regarding the dilemmas in research and they answer back accordingly. 8 themes emerged through the thematic analysis technique which contains various steps which were applied that leads to the findings and conclusion. The different dilemmas were informed consent, data integrity, plagiarism, transparency and a lot more. The major finding was that. the biggest ethical dilemma in research studies in Pakistan is working on sensitive topics



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specially in data collection phase.

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