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Research in Humanities and Social Sciences: Inventory amidst a shipwreck

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ABSTRACT: Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences often faces complex ethical and methodological challenges. This article focuses on exploring questionable practices in this field through a rigorous methodology combining real case analysis, anonymous testimonies, and triangulation with public documents and case studies. This approach has allowed distinguishing genuine researchers from impostors and uncovering often concealed aspects of academic research, thereby providing a deeper understanding of the mechanisms and motivations behind fraudulent research practices. These findings underscore the importance of upholding scientific integrity, researcher credibility, and public trust in academic research. They also highlight pathways to address opportunistic practices and scientific fraud, which persist as challenges in Humanities and Social Sciences research. Solutions involve promoting a culture of integrity and accountability through comprehensive measures such as researcher education and awareness, regulation by independent and transparent ethics committees, transparency in publishing research findings, and fostering appreciation for ethical research.

KEYWORDS: éthique, fraude, intégrité, recherche, humanités.

1 INTRODUCTION

Research in Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) plays a crucial role in understanding society, culture, and human behavior. In its mission, it faces not only traditional challenges related to methodology and data interpretation but also questionable practices that compromise the integrity of this research. Despite training programs and other instruments promoting researchers' honesty and objectivity, and the fact that the very functioning of science acts as an "anti-fraud shelter,[1]" there is an explosion of scientific misconduct and fraud. This persistence of questionable practices in research is problematic and forces us to hypothesize that questionable research practices yield results in HSS due to a research culture that insufficiently values integrity and responsibility in research. Thus, how can we preserve scientific integrity from pure fraud, minor academic misdemeanors, or a mix of both? To properly address this question, we will first inventory questionable research practices[2] in HSS, preceded by a distinction between genuine and false researchers, emphasizing opportunistic practices that devalue research integrity and undermine the ethical foundations of the scientific community. Then, we will propose a multidimensional approach to addressing the issue of poor research quality in HSS in Africa. To explore this phenomenon in depth, a specific methodology has been developed, centered on analyzing real cases and anonymous testimonies of teaching researchers and researchers in these fields.

2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted for this study combines qualitative approaches to gather and analyze detailed, contextualized data on questionable practices in social and human sciences.

Semi-structured interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with researchers and academics across various subfields of social and human sciences. The aim was to collect personal narratives and direct experiences regarding questionable practices such as plagiarism, data falsification, and uncredited appropriation of ideas. Participants were strategically chosen to ensure diverse perspectives and experiences. Anonymity was rigorously preserved to facilitate candid

discussions on sensitive topics. Interviews were structured around key themes identified in relevant literature, yet remained flexible to allow emergence of new aspects and unexpected details.

Real case analysis: Concurrently with interviews, real case studies were examined to illustrate concrete examples of questionable practices identified in academic literature. Each case was deeply analyzed to understand motivations, consequences, and underlying dynamics involved. Case selection focused on relevance and representativeness concerning trends observed in interviews and academic literature on research ethics.

Triangulation with public documents: To complement and enrich data from interviews and case studies, triangulation with public documents was conducted. This included reviewing institutional reports, ethical guidelines, ethics committee decisions, and other relevant documents providing additional context on questionable practices and institutional responses. This triangulation approach validated information obtained from interviews and case studies, offering complementary insights into challenges and dilemmas faced by researchers in their daily practices.

Additionally, to better understand instances of scientific integrity breaches in HSS, two typologies were combined: one from Sgard and Michalowski[3]categorizing fraud and misconduct into six domains, and another from 2016 categorizing offenses based on intentionality and severity. It's noted that there's no official national typology of scientific integrity breaches, and terms like fraud, misconduct, breaches of integrity, and questionable research practices would benefit from rigorous and consistent definitions by stakeholders, as highlighted in Corvol's report[4]. Here is the summary table of these breaches of scientific integrity:

«Fraude scientifique» générique

Fabrication de données
Falsification de données
Plagiat

FFP comprend normalement :

- L'exclusion sélective de données d'une analyse
- L'interprétation frauduleuse de données pour obtenir le résultat souhaité (par exemple en utilisant de façon incorrecte des méthodes statistiques)
- La retouche d'images dans les publications
- La production de fausses données ou résultats sous la pression de sponsors

Fraudes relatives aux données

- Ne pas conserver des données primaires
- De mauvaises pratiques de conservation ou de gestion des données
- La rétention de données vis-à-vis de la communauté scientifique

NB : Cela s'applique aussi aux échantillons physiques.

Conduite personnelle inappropriée

- Attitude inappropriée, harcèlement
- Supervision ou conseil insuffisant ou inadapté aux étudiants
- Inadaptation aux normes sociales ou culturelles

Pratique de recherche inappropriée

- Pratiquer des recherches dangereuses
- Mauvaise conception des expériences
- Erreurs expérimentales ou informatiques
- Violation des protocoles liés à l'expérimentation sur des sujets humains
- Abus sur des animaux de laboratoire

Fraudes liées aux publications

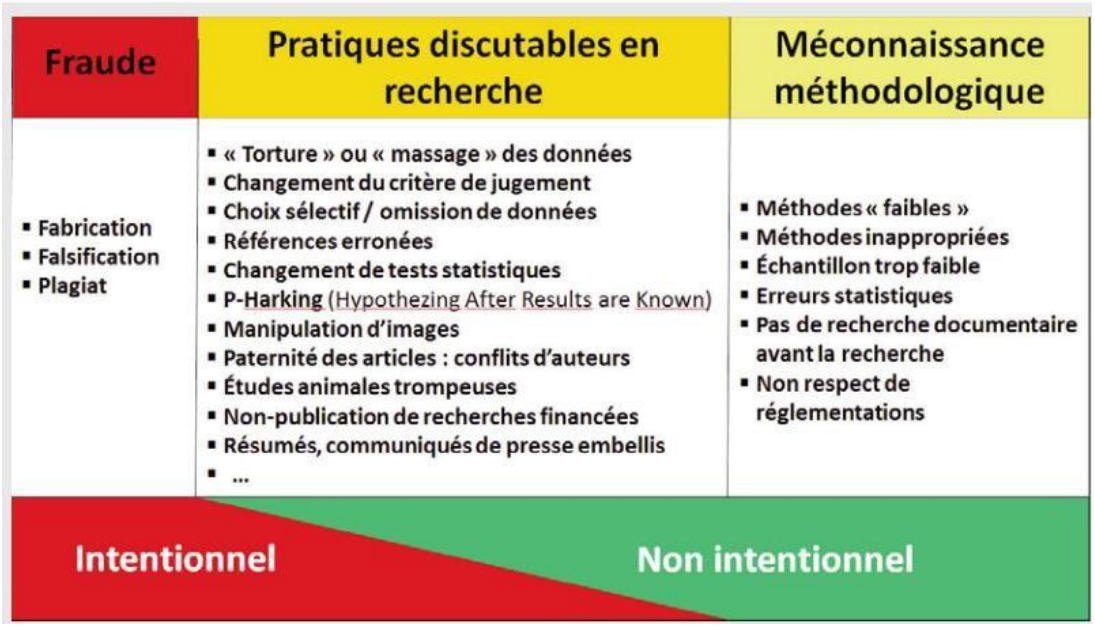
- Obtenir une position d'auteur de façon abusive
- Refuser une position d'auteur à des contributeurs
- Multiplier artificiellement ses publications (*«salami-slicing»*)

Fraudes financières ou autres

- Abus de sa position d'examinateur (ne pas révéler un conflit d'intérêt, retarder de façon abusive des travaux/publications de concurrents)
- Représenter de façon abusive ses travaux ou sa biographie
- Utiliser de façon abusive des fonds de recherche pour des achats non autorisés ou par gain personnel
- Porter des accusations de fraude sans preuves ou de façon malveillante

Sgard and Michalowski[3]

Each of these misconducts will be studied or identified in research in Humanities and Social Sciences, enabling us to determine the appropriate remedy. The three categories of the second typology, arranged along a severity scale and an Intentional - Non-intentional axis, will be infused into six domains of breaches of scientific integrity to provide a panoramic view of all that constitutes "bad science" in HSS. Here is the second report:



Adapted by Maisonneuve[5], cited by Serres[6].

These two typologies will in turn be combined with detailed and contextualized data on questionable practices in HSS. This mixed methodology aims to provide a more comprehensive view of the surge in misconducts in HSS, aiming to raise the torch of science we dream of across the sky of scientific research in Africa. In doing so, science can serve society, which in turn will take pride in its true researchers.

3 GENUINE AND FALSE RESEARCHERS

Academic research is meant to embark on the path to solving the world's mysteries. Therefore, it cannot be obscured by schemes of objective perception or intellect, and must refrain from delving into the realm of conceptualization, even though it acknowledges its affirmation as the foundation and determination, in its true site, of all scientific exploration. This means that even though research is conducted within and through concepts, it should not rely solely on concepts; for the principle that guides it cannot reside within concepts, as research cannot be an exploration through concepts. Its starting point and constant reference are the world immediately present to consciousness, everyday experience. It is true that for our intuition to be received as scientific knowledge, its content must be conceptualizable, but it is not because it is formed in concepts that it is scientific. The condition for attaining scientific status is not its principle. Conceptual research is conducted within a horizon constituted by concepts, far from the original vocation of research itself, distant from life and the world. Such demarcation is all the more interesting as it allows differentiation between the genuine researcher and the one who is not.

In light of this consideration, what distinguishes the genuine researcher from the false one is that for the former, questioning arises in the presence of reality itself; for the latter, it arises simply in preparation for the next CAMES (African and Malagasy Council for Higher Education), upcoming conference, next budget to capture, or a system, in the presence of which all renouncement is capitulatory. What is striking about the false researcher is the extreme variety of their manners and degrees. These practices are not immediately apparent; they are recognized in reference, betrayed in similarity, confirmed by precedence, and demonstrated through the intersection of clues. In the context of this reflection, the essential distinction between an authentic researcher and an impostor lies in the source of their questioning. For the authentic researcher, curiosity arises spontaneously in reaction to the concrete reality surrounding them. Each discovery, each observation stimulates a deep desire to understand and contribute to collective knowledge. Their commitment to research is a natural response to the quest for truth and a passion for their field of study. In contrast, for the impostor researcher, questioning is shaped by utilitarian goals and opportunities to seize. Their attitude is conditioned by external incentives such as academic recognition, promotions, or simply professional survival within a system where success is often measured by quantitative rather than qualitative criteria.

Another troubling manifestation of this opportunistic mentality is the use of publication for personal or political purposes. As the imminent opening of the CAMES platform approaches, some researchers are known to seek advantageous positions in scientific articles or among their colleagues. This practice, often disguised under the pretext of collaboration or co-authorship,

aims to maximize individual benefits rather than promoting genuine knowledge and research. The problem lies not only in the legitimate desire for academic recognition but also in the unfair and manipulative methods used to achieve it. By seeking positions in publications or co-opting colleagues to artificially increase citation counts or publications, these researchers undermine the integrity of the scientific process. This distorts perceptions of real advances and truly significant contributions to their field of study.

The behavior of some researchers who use scientific publication as a means to secure academic promotions, without a genuine commitment to quality research, is a growing concern in academia. This opportunistic practice not only devalues the integrity of research but also undermines the ethical foundations upon which the scientific community relies. The race for publications to accumulate points for academic advancement has become a ubiquitous reality in many university evaluation systems. This heightened pressure leads some researchers to prioritize quantity over quality, often at the expense of innovation and scientific rigor. Quick, superficial, or even dishonest studies may be produced to fulfill the necessary quotas for career advancement, seriously compromising the credibility and relevance of research.

The authentic researcher distinguishes themselves by their ability to remain true to their intellectual and ethical principles, even in the face of institutional pressures and external expectations. They are driven by intrinsic curiosity and a deep desire to generate meaningful knowledge that transcends the immediate demands of the academic world. Their research is guided by a sincere commitment to truth and a willingness to positively contribute to their field of study. In contrast, the impostor researcher may be tempted to compromise the integrity of their research to meet publication imperatives or personal gains. Their motivation is often oriented toward short-term goals such as promotions, securing funding, or simply complying with pre-established norms within the academic system. This compromise can lead to questionable practices such as data manipulation, plagiarism, or selective interpretation of results to fit preconceived expectations.

The true value of scientific research lies in its integrity and commitment to authentic and impartial discovery. Genuine researchers uphold this ethic, defending methodological rigor and transparency in their work. Their contributions enrich the corpus of human knowledge and inspire public trust in research findings. The distinction between a genuine researcher and an impostor lies in their underlying motivation and approach to scientific inquiry. While the former is guided by intrinsic curiosity and a commitment to truth, the latter is often influenced by external incentives and short-term opportunities.

The consequences of such practices are damaging on several levels. On one hand, they harm the reputation and credibility of academic institutions, which may be perceived as tolerating or even encouraging such behavior. On the other hand, they erode public trust in science and research, crucial for guiding public policies and investments in education. To counter this worrying trend, significant measures must be taken at various levels. First and foremost, academic institutions must promote a research culture based on ethics and quality rather than the quantity of publications. This requires a more balanced assessment of academic performance, focusing on the real impact of research on society and methodological rigor. It is essential to recognize and promote an academic culture that values integrity, rigor, and ethical commitment to preserve the credibility and relevance of scientific research in our society. In the upcoming section, we will highlight questionable practices among researchers, starting with generic scientific fraud.

4 GENERIC SCIENTIFIC FRAUD

Scientific fraud is defined as "a serious and intentional violation in the conduct of research and in the dissemination of results," excluding "errors made in good faith or honest differences of opinion, [7]" and includes falsification, fabrication, plagiarism, and misappropriation of another researcher's work. Our investigation led us to observe this misconduct in the HSS research. The researcher behaves like a plundering soldier, constantly on the lookout for the best students, whose work he adopts after their defense, claiming it as his own. He borrows entire lines of thought from the student, carefully omitting their name. He appropriates the core ideas from his student and taints everything else. It's akin to a Don Juan fluttering from one student to another, picking ideas he fancies and claiming them as his own. He behaves like bees "plundering here and there the flowers... afterwards making a honey that is all theirs [8]". He reshapes the borrowed pieces from his students and merges them to create a work entirely his own. The strength of his research lies in the refined remodeling of goods taken from various places, transporting a whole of thought elsewhere to build his theoretical edifice without archetype. From the pillaging of an isolated element of another's thought, he manages to write articles that neither the knowledge of the other's work nor his "well-being" could have foreseen: a perilous endeavor that aligns with the effort of another. His "inheritance is not preceded by any will [9]". This researcher is mediocre because his work is a pitiful plunder of the work of others.

The researcher fully copies, in all its avatars, the work of his student, without skipping a single paragraph, with the student's consent made possible through subtle influence. The researcher literally takes on the ideas and text of his learner without citing him even once. He settles cheaply with his student by taking back his work. The student's thoughts, lacking a notary to

ensure the legitimacy of the legacy, are used by his supervisor as he sees fit. We owe this idea to our colleague, Professor Gnelé José Edgar, who cleverly drew our attention to this practice, which operates by erasing the author, promoting a false semblance of originality. In the realm of science, we conceive no more urgent task than to connect these ungrateful works back to their authors, those who seek to erase them. Anything that can constitute the particular brilliance and dignity of the researcher is infinitely better assumed and honored when it is original. We can barely contain our smile when we see researchers who have climbed all the steps of CAMES through this sole procedure.

Research is no longer a response to direct experience, and science is done by proxy. Therefore, it is essential to recall that research must express facts because it maintains an organic correspondence with the totality of reality. This makes research an empirical reaction and its formulas immediately grounded in concrete knowledge of the world. The unity of formulas and the intuitive world realizes the harmony called Truth by the ancients. The truths found are through the immediate consideration of the real world, which allows us to say that the immediate foundation of research is more direct and secure than the mediate foundation by reproduction, by the letter of another researcher. This does not mean that we reject the unity and sequence of particular concepts, but it seems to us a notable superiority that these concepts are thus subsequent. Therefore, their truth no longer needs to be demonstrated but will support the truth without any researcher having to take care of it. Perfect knowledge of a thing can be exclusive when placed in the multiplicity of things in life, but it cannot be false. No objective conception of nature born from its immediate consideration and deduced with logic can be false because nature itself does not lie. Research by proxy makes both science and nature lie.

5 QUESTIONABLE PRACTICES CONCERNING DATA

Some HSS researchers do not stop at embellishing data in the sense that Seror and Ravaud say, "Data embellishment consists of reporting study results in a form that does not exactly correspond to reality to present them in a more favorable or attractive light.[10]" They also manipulate and invent them, a consequence of field research. The data that the researcher claims to collect in the field are the product of his own thoughts. The finished form of this cheating is verbatim. The immense texture of collected narratives materializes in an identity without negation in such a way that this actualization is not a creation of the new but a reproduction of what the researcher has in his head. Moreover, what credibility can we give to the imperium of narration and to representationalist logic if we know that we have no way of verifying the statements collected? Furthermore, we have no way to protect ourselves from the bad faith of the man. If the surveyed person had lied to us, we would probably have no way of knowing. A verbatim has certainly proven itself as a literal collection method, but the conditions of its production among most African researchers do not reflect a synchronized system of affects and percepts. What is common is that students are content to lend their own ideas to those surveyed. The fabricated verba thus lack their intimacy. Researchers take these verba and accelerate the process of altering scientific data. These researchers are false researchers because falsehood is not the object of science. Such an attitude is hardly of scientific interest because it ignores the original dimension of research, which focuses on life, the world in its concreteness. It participates in creative refusal and creative imitation.

Most of these researchers do not want to yield the least gift of self in the name of authentic knowledge. The most avid ‘researchers’ who boast of ‘fieldwork’ - there is an air of snobbery in this story - content themselves in the best case with giving their assistants, their students, or young people - without much knowledge of the data to be collected or having an approximate mastery of the collection tools - prebends to collect some perceptions/practices/data from such and such a people. In general, these ‘collectors’ camp for a few days in a village and haphazardly collect anecdotes, rituals, practices through mischievous and jocular informants, which they pour into the Researcher who takes care of them. publish them in their raw states without ever really questioning the authenticity of the elements, without ever understanding the profound meaning of life scenes, without placing them in the entirety of the existential universe of the peoples observed, without placing them in their historicity, without understanding the dynamics. These data sell very well to European donors in search of sensation and savagery. The recurrence of this practice does not mean that there has not been and that there are no researchers who have happily devoted themselves to research by doing fieldwork.

Other researchers take one or a few concepts from the vast field of ideas, then make them the starting point for their research. The principle behind this choice is entirely arbitrary - a begging the question -, its content is as empty as it is universal, so anything can be put there. Everything can logically follow there as well. At each articulation of his research, concepts are polysemic, and their choice is guided by the result he would like to achieve. The initial position of his inferences already contains, as a founding anticipation, the teleological postulation. This is why it is common to hear that the researcher only discovers what he wants to discover. What is to be reproached to these researchers is having privileged conceptual combinations over the content of sensory experience. The starting point of their research has its source outside empirical intuition and correspondingly the results of their research are generally pedantic deductions, their work abstract, their form extremely artificial. The basis of their research consists of a petition that hangs in the air its foundation. Their research simply

has no basis. This is also what makes it difficult for us to transpose what we have theoretically posed into practical fields: research is an enemy of practice because the rational is not verified in the whole empirical or because the researcher has started from what should be and is not when the true starting point is an experience, a fact.

Today we are witnessing the spectacular rise of a particular type of researcher who engages in research on indigenous knowledge. Most of these researchers often take pleasure in exhuming them and thus indulge in easy exoticism or a kind of lachrymose narcissism. The most serious are employed in dumping without discernment virulent and endemic scientific productions of Afro-centrism, with the promotion of stereotypes inseparable from endogenous knowledge, amplified by an ideological, mystifying, and mythogenic vision. In a word, indigenous knowledge is taken as a refuge value. One can even assert, without exaggeration, that it is especially the failure to extract oneself from the legacy of traditional knowledge, which no one can do without, which has, nowadays, essentially paralyzed all the efforts attempted, even by the best minds, to deal with issues of indigenous knowledge in a positive manner.

These postures, which are actually impostures common to most African researchers, are so intimate to them that none of them perceives them. Invisible, they go without saying like a good day for a well-educated child. These practices have yet to be properly thought out. We have chosen to describe them without complacency for an awareness of the lead that we attach to the wings of science and which prevents it from taking flight. Science is like a bird, it has two wings: attitude and data. If we choose to make only one beat, it will grope around by standing still. If we make both beat at the same time, it will fly over our life by instructing you through its panoramic view of the problems we have and the appropriate medication. It was therefore necessary to undermine these practices so that we could replace them with positive scientific practices.

6 QUESTIONABLE RESEARCH PRACTICES IN PUBLICATIONS

No one ignores the central role that publications play in researchers' careers. One wonders if the formula "publish or perish" does not primarily serve as an alibi for questionable research practices, disregarding the standards and requirements of scientific publication. These practices encompass several aspects. First, there is the issue of authorship of articles. Researchers often include names of established professors or those with global influence in their field, either to ensure the prestige of the latter precedes their text or to benefit from questionable article review practices. Secondly, there is the mention of a person as a co-author without their consent. A notable example: Professor Gnelé Edgard, then Editor-in-Chief of the LASH Review at the University of Parakou, received an article for publication. According to his statements, upon reviewing the article, he noticed among the authors a scientific personality. This piqued his curiosity, leading him to anonymize the article and send it for assessment to the mentioned personality, who returned with severe comments indicating serious intellectual deficiencies of the original author. This example is representative of textbook cases of publication fraud.

Sometimes, researchers feign forgetfulness of a co-author, dishonestly promising to rectify the error by placing them in another publication. When researchers are lenient, they relegate the author to a non-significant position, creating conflicts over authorship[11]. This unethical practice distorts the original purpose of publication and deprives researchers of the fruits of their labor. It often accompanies a more insidious practice: willingly publishing their work in so-called predatory journals. This is inevitable because reputable journals tend to demand justified contributions from each co-author to the research results they wish to publish. Generally, anyone who:

- played a substantial role in the project and experimental protocol design, results development, and/or analysis and interpretation of results;
- participated in article writing or made significant content contributions during review; and
- explicitly approves the final manuscript version, including both scientific content and the list of signatories, thereby directly assuming responsibility; a requirement also by editors[11].

The INSERM Scientific Integrity Delegation adds that: "These signature rules apply regardless of status considerations and remain valid if you have changed laboratories in the meantime. Those who contributed to the work without meeting all three criteria should be acknowledged at the end of the article, with their consent[11]."

Finally, it is pertinent to explore undue pressures on authors and collaborators, including coercion to include undeserving authors in publications to enhance an article's visibility or impact. In humanities and social sciences, status considerations often outweigh the real contributions of co-authors, especially concerning doctoral students. Sometimes, a doctoral student signs as a non-significant co-author, or sometimes not at all. To compound these unethical practices, their work is submitted to multiple scientific journals simultaneously, reminding them that their student work lacks the weight of a master's. It also happens that researchers, concerned about the quality of their work, submit their articles to several journals at the same time or resubmit

rejected articles to journals without addressing the previous observations. These practices cause misery in publication in the humanities and social sciences in Africa.

Certainly, these types of practices have prompted Web of Science to track published scientific articles, assess their potential for retractions, and compile statistics confirming an increase in publication fraud, even accelerating the retraction rate in publications. Thus, from 1977 to 2013, the number of retractions increased from just over one to more than 50. A study conducted by Ferric, Steen, and Arturo[12] in 2012 showed that 67.4% of article retraction requests were motivated by suspicions of fraud. During our survey, 0% of researchers were never retracted after their article's publication. However, 5% admitted to using practices that cast serious doubt on the truthfulness of their research and consequently on the seriousness of the journals that published them. Beau, already noted this practice in scientific publications: "Sentences without meaning, copy-pasting, images, and graphs manipulated. According to a study conducted by the specialized firm Clear Skies and revealed by the scientific journal Nature, approximately 70,000 articles resembling false content aimed at disinformation or career boosting were published in 2022 in scientific journals, about 2% of the total scientific production that year.[13]" These fake scientific articles turn scientific journals into veritable "article mills".

7 DATA-RELATED FRAUDS

Data fraud in Letters and Human Sciences research is a serious practice that compromises the integrity of academic research and its contribution to understanding and addressing social problems. This form of scientific fraud can take various forms, all with profound implications for the credibility of scientific results and public trust in researchers and institutions. Leduc and Letellier remind us that: "There is a continuum between proven fraud and manipulated results. Data are cooked to fit only the points that stick; manipulation of photos with Photoshop; premature publication of results that couldn't be reproduced; evasiveness about experimental protocols to avoid verification or copying; hiding results; slicing data into multiple articles risking each to be incomprehensible in isolation, etc.[14]" During our investigation, we found that what these two authors describe was evidenced by the deliberate manipulation of information collected during studies. This includes altering figures, selectively excluding data that do not support the research hypothesis, or even fabricating results outright. These practices often aim to achieve conclusions that align with researchers' or sponsors' expectations, compromising the validity of the drawn conclusions.

Similarly, in the humanities, falsification can involve sociological studies or anthropological research where details are altered to support specific theories or narratives. Motivations for data falsification vary and include pressure to publish positive results to secure funding, enhance academic reputation, or participate in the next CAMES. In some cases, researchers are tempted to falsify data out of desire for recognition, fear of negative results, or delays in obtaining a degree, which could jeopardize their careers. Institutional pressures and increased competition for research resources also play a significant role in these fraudulent practices. The consequences of data falsification are profound and widespread. Academically, it undermines the knowledge base on which future advances rely, introducing false or biased information into the body of scientific literature. Ethically, it breaches the trust of fellow researchers, students, and the general public in the scientific community. Moreover, practically, it can lead to ill-informed public policies or ineffective social interventions based on unreliable data.

Data-related frauds also include plagiarism in all its forms. In this case, the author rewrites the ideas from a source without using the same words but without providing proper citation. It is still considered plagiarism because the original idea comes from the source. Here are the different forms of plagiarism that our exploration has led us to discover:

Conceptual plagiarism: Conceptual plagiarism occurs when someone borrows the ideas or general concept of a work without citing the source. Even if the words are different, the essence of the original work is used without permission. Idea theft is certainly intellectual dishonesty but does not constitute plagiarism if only ideas and not the form expressing them are borrowed. "It must be understood that the plagiarist commits no offense or crime as long as he borrows only ideas and not the form that expresses them.[15]" "Ideas are free to travel," it is said.

Data plagiarism: This type of plagiarism involves direct copying of data, graphs, tables, or other information without citing the original source. This practice compromises academic integrity by distorting results and violating research ethics standards. Consequences include loss of trust in research and potential impacts on political and social decisions based on non-original data.

Self-plagiarism: Self-plagiarism occurs when an author reuses their own previous work without clearly indicating that it is an earlier work. Although the author owns the rights to their own work, it is necessary to disclose all previous reuses.

Online plagiarism: With the advent of the Internet, online plagiarism has become more common. This can involve direct copying of content available online without permission or even recycling existing work to submit as original. There is also AI

plagiarism, which manifests in the use of algorithms to generate content similar or identical to that of other sources without properly citing the originals. This practice automates data manipulation, often circumventing traditional plagiarism detectors. Challenges posed include preserving academic integrity and the need for more advanced detection tools to prevent this emerging form of intellectual fraud.

Style plagiarism: Style plagiarism occurs when someone deliberately imitates another author's writing style without citing the source. Even if the words are different, the structure and tone can be so similar that they constitute a copyright violation.

Credit plagiarism: This type of plagiarism occurs when someone takes credit for another's work. This can occur in work environments where collaboration is common but not all contributors receive the recognition they deserve. The Emeritus Professor is seen as a Nobel Prize winner when he was part of a research group whose results were awarded. Others are never cited, and it is never said that it was a collective work.

Translation plagiarism: Translating a work without permission and presenting it as your own is also considered plagiarism. Even if you change the language of the text, the ideas still belong to the original author.

Reference plagiarism: In some cases, people may falsify or invent references to give the impression of having conducted thorough research. This is a form of plagiarism that harms academic and professional integrity.

The consequences of plagiarism can be serious, ranging from loss of credibility and trust to severe academic or professional sanctions, including expulsion from school or loss of employment. It is essential to recognize and respect the copyrights of others and to provide proper attribution whenever using someone's work or ideas.

To counter these cases of data-related fraud, academic institutions in the Humanities and Social Sciences must implement stringent measures for control and verification. This includes fostering a culture of integrity and ethical research, training researchers in best research practices, and establishing rigorous processes for supervision and verification of collected data. Ethics committees also play a crucial role in reviewing research protocols and ensuring adherence to high ethical standards. Data falsification in HSS poses a serious threat to scientific integrity. While progress has been made in detecting and preventing such fraud, it remains essential to maintain constant vigilance and encourage a culture of transparency and accountability within the academic community. This will ensure that research continues to serve its primary purpose: to credibly and meaningfully contribute to advancing knowledge and improving society.

8 IMPROPER PERSONAL CONDUCT

Research in HSS relies on strict ethical standards to ensure integrity, reliability, and fairness in research and communication of findings. However, inappropriate or unethical practices occasionally occur, compromising the validity and credibility of research. Various forms of improper personal conduct were identified during our investigation. We present them here along with their implications.

Data fabrication: Data fabrication involves the deliberate creation of experimental results or data without legitimate means. This occurs to enhance statistical significance or support a preconceived hypothesis. Data fabrication constitutes a serious violation of research ethics and can lead to publication retractions, loss of trust, and professional sanctions.

Data falsification: Data falsification occurs when researchers modify, manipulate, or delete data to fit their expectations or hypotheses. This includes selectively excluding data points or manipulating graphical representations of results. Data falsification compromises scientific integrity and can lead to erroneous conclusions.

Plagiarism: As mentioned earlier, plagiarism is inappropriate conduct identified in HSS research. This includes literal, paraphrased, or conceptual plagiarism of others' work, as well as failure to adhere to proper citation standards. Plagiarism undermines research credibility and violates the copyright of original authors.

Lack of informed consent: In some sociological, anthropological, geographical, philosophical, and literary studies, especially involving oral literature, informed consent of participants is often not required. This fails to ensure that participants understand the research objectives, potential risks, and benefits, and give informed consent. Lack of informed consent violates fundamental ethical principles and can have serious legal and ethical repercussions.

Selective or biased publication: Selective or biased publication occurs when researchers choose to publish only results that support their hypotheses or interests, while ignoring or minimizing contradictory results. This can distort data perception and lead to misleading conclusions.

Undisclosed conflicts of interest: Conflicts of interest may arise when researchers have financial, professional, or personal relationships that could influence their research decisions or conclusions. It is essential to disclose all potential conflicts of interest to ensure transparency and research credibility.

Harassment or discrimination: Harassment or discrimination based on age, gender, or other characteristics was also identified in our investigation. Young researchers are often denied the floor. It is common to hear that say, "it is the tenured professor who is speaking, be quiet." Such personal behaviors are unacceptable in all aspects of HSS research. These behaviors create a hostile environment and can hinder participation and collaboration in research.

Lack of transparency in methodology: Transparent research methodology is essential for enabling verification and replication of results by other researchers. Lack of transparency in methodology, including failure to report important details or study limitations, compromises research integrity.

9 FINANCIAL FRAUD IN RESEARCH

In scientific research in the Humanities and Social Sciences, unscrupulous researchers sometimes resort to fraudulent practices to advance their careers or obtain funding. Forms of financial fraud in this field are varied and subtle. They range from deliberate data manipulation to result falsification, concealing crucial information, or writing ghost articles funded by obscure sources. This latter practice often involves the use of consulting firms or disreputable publishers offering writing and publication services for a fee, thereby clouding any subsequent investigation trails. Another common strategy is inflating research-related costs. Unscrupulous researchers sometimes inflate project budgets by manipulating quotations, overcharging for services, or claiming fictitious expenses. These practices not only secure additional funds but also justify prefabricated results or non-existent conclusions.

Researchers also stand out for false projects. The researcher subtly hatches his strategy so that the results of the same project are sold to several funders. This assumes that in the meantime a fake project has been set up to capture funding and consequently there is data manipulation. Our investigation has revealed that some researchers are scared when funders come to see the results of the research they funded. What could justify such a state of mind? What about the results regularly sent to the same funders? Our exploration led us to determine three possible answers. First, the hypotheses are cleverly adjusted to ensure that the theories inevitably match their premeditated results – this result had been delivered to another funder -. The researcher meticulously twists the data by readjusting them to the results that were actually achieved. The poorly disqualified practical references make the science of the already said and the already known. Next, the fake trainings that were declared because they do not exist, raise the heart and disturb the researchers since they do not exist.

The extent of these financial frauds is difficult to quantify, mainly due to academic institutions' reluctance to acknowledge their existence and the complexity of investigations needed to uncover them. Moreover, the perpetrators of such frauds often rely on networks of complicity within their institution or among their peers, making reports rare and risky for those who dare to make them. The consequences of these frauds are detrimental on several levels. Ethically, they undermine the integrity of scientific research and compromise public trust in academic institutions. Financially, they divert precious resources that could be allocated to legitimate and innovative research projects. Furthermore, they distort the general perception of scientific progress and discoveries, potentially directing public policies and investments towards inappropriate paths.

To counter these practices, a multidimensional approach is necessary. This should include rigorous financial audits of research projects, increased transparency in fund management, and strengthened ethics policies with deterrent sanctions for proven fraud. Furthermore, fostering a culture of ethical and responsible research within academic institutions is essential for effectively preventing and detecting financial frauds.

10 CONCLUSION

Using a methodology combining semi-structured interviews, case studies, and triangulation with public documents, we have been able to explore deeply and nuancedly the questionable research practices in Letters and Humanities and Human Sciences. It has revealed aspects of academic research that are often hidden, offering a better understanding of the mechanisms and motivations behind fraudulent research practices. These results underline the importance of preserving scientific integrity in Letters and Human Sciences, which demands a systematic and rigorous approach. Opportunistic practices and scientific fraud can only be eradicated through increased vigilance and strengthened culture of accountability. It is imperative that academic institutions and researchers themselves adopt strict codes of conduct and adhere to them scrupulously. First and foremost, the establishment of independent and transparent ethics committees is crucial. These committees must be empowered to monitor, evaluate, and sanction deviant behaviors. Their role extends beyond repression

to education and awareness-raising among researchers about the importance of integrity in their work. Furthermore, ongoing training of researchers on ethical issues and best research practices must be systematized. This includes workshops, seminars, and training modules integrated into university curricula. Young researchers, in particular, must be equipped to recognize and avoid questionable practices from the outset of their careers. Transparency in publishing research findings is also crucial. Academic journals must strengthen their peer review procedures and adopt open publication policies. This not only ensures the quality and truthfulness of published work but also fosters a culture of honest sharing and collaboration among researchers. Moreover, promoting a culture of recognizing and valuing ethical research is necessary. This can be achieved by establishing rewards and distinctions for exemplary work in terms of ethics and innovation. Researchers should be encouraged to view integrity not as a constraint but as an added value to their work. In summary, combating questionable practices in HSS requires a comprehensive approach that combines education, regulation, transparency, and valorization. Only through collective and concerted efforts can we guarantee the integrity and credibility of research in this vital field for understanding and advancing our societies.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

I certify that I have NO affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest (such as honoraria; educational grants; participation in speakers' bureaus; membership, employment, consultancies, stock ownership, or other equity interest; and expert testimony or patent licensing arrangements), or non-financial interest (such as personal or professional relationships, affiliations, knowledge or beliefs) in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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