

# Clickbait Culture and Its Impact on Professionalism and Ethics in Academia: A Systematic Analysis

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## ABSTRACT

The relationship among the concepts of professionalism, ethics and clickbait culture in academia is an important subject matter for systematic investigation. This relationship calls into question the delicate balance between upholding ethical standards in academia and the push to “publish or perish” among academics leading to the use of media tactics to reach a wider audience as the demand for accumulating citations has become one of the yardsticks that measure success. This paper is a systematic analysis that investigates the effects of clickbait culture on academic professionalism and the ethical dissemination of research, paying special attention to how clickbait is affecting the behavior of academics in the contemporary technologically perceptive world.

**Keywords:** Professionalism, ethics, clickbait culture, academia, systematic analysis

## INTRODUCTION

The emergence of clickbait culture in academia can be linked to the growing demands placed on academics to increase their exposure, effect, and influence in a fiercely cutthroat and digitally advanced world (Blevins & Wicks 2021). This problem reflects the larger academic movement toward a metrics-based evaluation, where professional advancement frequently depends on citation counts, social media sharing, and visibility in academic databases and online platforms like Google Scholar. More sensationalized or simplified study summaries are used to garner attention because academics and institutions alike are realizing the necessity of adjusting to digital techniques to reach wider audiences.

According to Friesen (2018), clickbait culture has raised serious ethical concerns that could jeopardize the quality and legitimacy of academic research, even while they provide instant attention and the possibility of increased public involvement. The difficulty is striking a balance between upholding academic professionalism and ethical norms, and the need for publicity. Digital platforms must be used judiciously by academics, organizations, and publishers to convey research in ways that uphold academic integrity, avoid sensationalism, and increase public confidence in the importance of scholarly work.

Clickbait culture has emerged in academia because of the growing demand on scholars to increase their exposure, boost citation counts, and win professional recognition in a fiercely competitive, digitally driven environment (Blevins & Wicks 2021, Baker, Willinsky, & Wood 2016). Clickbait has penetrated academic publishing methods. It is typified by sensationalized or deceptive headlines and material that is primarily intended to draw attention and create traffic (Van Dijk, 2018). Scholars must strike a balance between the demand for publicity and the obligation to respect ethical norms and preserve the professionalism anticipated in academia as academic research depends more and more on digital platforms and social media for distribution.

This poses a serious challenge to the academic community. Such questions as, how can researchers and academic institutions balance the conflicting demands of ethical integrity and exposure in a time when research success and impact are increasingly determined by digital engagement rather than scholarly rigor alone? Significant ethical issues arise when clickbait-style techniques, like overly simplistic summaries or inflated claims in article headers, are used in scholarly writing. These consist of:

1. **Research findings misrepresentation:** Sensational headlines that distort the actual results of academic studies may cause the public to misinterpret research findings. This harms the reputation of the academic community and the validity of intellectual work.
2. **Scholarly integrity:** In their rush to attract attention or increase citations, some academics may be tempted to sacrifice the accuracy, nuance, or complexity of their work. This could result in facts or findings being oversimplified or even fabricated to make them more “clickable.”
3. **Undermining academic professionalism:** Academics may now place more emphasis on producing visually arresting, viral content than making long-lasting contributions to their fields due to the increased reliance on digital indicators like altmetrics and social media engagement. This shift challenges the accepted norms of academic professionalism because rigor, peer review, and intellectual honesty have long been the pillars of academic work.
4. **Public faith and ethical communication:** The prevalence of clickbait may lead to a greater lack of faith in academic research, especially among non-expert audiences. If the public becomes accustomed to erroneous or oversimplified representations of research, their opinion of the importance of scientific effort and its perceived significance in society may deteriorate.

This paper is a systematic analysis that attempts to alleviate these concerns by investigating the ways in which clickbait culture in academia interacts with researchers’ ethical responsibilities and the professionalism of academic communication. Through a systematic analysis of prior research and case studies, this study assesses how clickbait culture affects the credibility, integrity, and ethical standards of academia. The difficulty lies in finding a balance between the increasing need for internet visibility and maintaining professionalism and ethical standards required for scholarly work.

### **Overarching Aim of the Study**

The overarching aim of this systematic analysis is to examine the intersection of professionalism, ethics, and the rise of clickbait culture within the context of academia. Ultimately, the study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of how the evolving nature of academic publishing, driven by digital media and visibility concerns, affects the ethical conduct and professionalism of researchers. In doing so, this study seeks to offer insights into how academia can navigate these challenges to safeguard the integrity of knowledge production and dissemination.

As digital technologies reshape the landscape of academic publishing, this study seeks to explore the impact of clickbait strategies on academic research, the ethical dilemmas they introduce, and their implications for scholarly professionalism. By synthesizing existing literature, this systematic analysis seeks to understand the broader implications of clickbait on the academic community, considering how it influences public trust in scholarly work, research credibility, and the ethical responsibilities of academics in an increasingly interconnected and media-driven world.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this study were:

1. Examine the impact of digital visibility metrics such as citations, altmetrics and social media engagement on academic publishing practices.
2. Assess the ethical dilemmas of using clickbait tactics such as sensationalized titles, misleading headlines in academic writing and its potential to distort the accuracy and depth of research.
3. Analyze the potential conflict between the pressures of academic career advancement such as publish-or-perish culture and maintaining scholarly professionalism and research integrity.

4. Explore strategies for ethical communication in academia, ensuring that research is presented in an engaging yet responsible manner without sacrificing the core principles of academic rigor and transparency.

### **Operational Definitions**

1. **Professionalism:** According to Becker and Neumann (2020), professionalism in academia is the upholding of high standards of competence, conduct, and ethical behaviour in scholarly endeavours. It entails upholding impartiality, honesty, and regard for intellectual property.
2. **Academic Ethics:** The set of moral standards that govern research, publication, and academic cooperation is known as academic ethics (Macfarlane, 2021). In academic settings, ethical considerations include things like truthfulness, openness, preventing plagiarism, and making sure that study findings are equitable.
3. **Clickbait Culture:** According to Tufekci (2018), clickbait culture is the use of sensationalized or deceptive headlines and material that is primarily intended to drive visitors to websites rather than offer accurate, insightful, or valuable content. This can show up in academic settings as titles or abstracts that are too dramatic or make more promises than the work does.
4. **Systematic Analysis:** This is the systematic and methodical process of dissecting an issue, circumstance, or system into its component elements for easy comprehension of its structure, behavior, and relationships (Gough et al, 2017). To produce well-informed decisions or conclusions, a systematic procedure of data collection, organization, interpretation, and evaluation is required (Creswell, 2014). Systematic analysis is frequently applied in systems engineering, commercial decision-making, policy formation, and research (Blanchard, 2011).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

In order to investigate how clickbait culture affects professionalism, ethics, and academic integrity in scholarly communication, this study used a systematic review and meta-analytic methodology. While reducing bias, a systematic method enables the organized identification, assessment, and synthesis of current research findings (Higgins et al., 2019).

### **Search Strategy**

Major academic databases like Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science were searched thoroughly for relevant literature. Studies published between 2015 and 2023 were included in the search, which reflects the growth of digital publishing and metric-driven academic settings.

### **Keywords included combinations such as:**

1. “clickbait and academic publishing”
2. “sensationalism and research ethics”
3. “academic integrity and digital media”

Systematic keyword searching improves comprehensiveness and reduces selection bias (Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2003).

### **Study Selection Process**

The study selection process followed the PRISMA (2020) framework, which provides a structured and transparent method for identifying, screening, and selecting relevant studies for systematic reviews. This approach enhances replicability, rigor, and accountability in the selection of literature (Page et al., 2021).

**Identification:** In the identification stage, a comprehensive search was conducted across multiple academic databases, including Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science. Search strings were developed using relevant keywords. All retrieved records were compiled into a reference management system, where duplicate entries were identified and removed. This stage ensured a broad and unbiased pool of potentially relevant studies.

**Screening:** During the screening phase, the titles and abstracts of the identified studies were reviewed to assess their relevance to the research topic. At this stage:

1. Studies clearly unrelated to clickbait or academic publishing were excluded
2. Non-scholarly sources (e.g., blogs, opinion articles) were removed
3. Studies not meeting the inclusion criteria were filtered out

This step helped to narrow down the dataset by eliminating irrelevant studies while retaining those with potential relevance.

**Eligibility:** In the eligibility stage, the full texts of the remaining studies were retrieved and carefully examined. Each study was assessed against the predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria, focusing on:

1. Relevance to clickbait and academic contexts
2. Methodological quality and rigor
3. Availability of sufficient data for analysis

### **Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

To guarantee relevance and rigor, studies were chosen based on predetermined criteria. Peer-reviewed studies that addressed clickbait or sensationalism in academic settings were the main focus of inclusion; irrelevant and non-scholarly studies were omitted. This approach helped to improve the systematic review's validity and transparency (Liberati et al., 2009). Specifically, Tables 1 and 2 show the criteria used for the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

**Table 1: Inclusion Criteria**

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Topic Relevance</b>	Studies that explicitly examine clickbait, sensationalism, or attention-driven content in academic or scholarly communication.
<b>Context</b>	Research focused on higher education, academic publishing, or scholarly communication systems.
<b>Time Frame</b>	Studies published between 2015 and 2023 (to capture the rise of digital and metric-driven publishing).
<b>Study Design</b>	Both qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods studies, including conceptual and theoretical papers relevant to ethics and professionalism.
<b>Outcomes of Interest</b>	Studies addressing at least one of the following:- Academic reputation- Academic integrity/ethics- Citation rates or visibility- Public trust in research
<b>Publication Type</b>	Peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and reputable conference papers.
<b>Language</b>	Studies published in English.
<b>Accessibility</b>	Full-text articles available for detailed review and analysis.

**Table 2: Exclusion Criteria**

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Irrelevant Topic</b>	Studies focusing on clickbait in non-academic contexts only (e.g., entertainment media, marketing, or journalism without scholarly linkage).
<b>Non-Scholarly Sources</b>	Blog posts, opinion pieces, editorials, or non-peer-reviewed content lacking academic rigor.
<b>Outdated Studies</b>	Studies published before 2015, unless they provide foundational theoretical insights (rare exceptions may be justified).
<b>Insufficient Data</b>	Studies that do not report findings related to ethics, professionalism, credibility, or academic outcomes.
<b>Duplicate Studies</b>	Repeated publications or multiple reports of the same study (only the most complete version retained).
<b>Language Limitation</b>	Studies not published in English (unless translation is available).
<b>Unavailable Full Text</b>	Articles where full text cannot be accessed for detailed evaluation.

### **Justification for the Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

The inclusion and exclusion criteria were designed to ensure that only relevant, high-quality, and recent studies addressing clickbait within academic contexts were analysed. This approach enhances the validity and reliability of the findings by focusing on studies that directly engage with issues of academic integrity, professionalism, and digital publishing dynamics.

### **Data Extraction**

Key study characteristics, including authorship, methodology, and conclusions, were gathered using a structured data extraction form. Standardized extraction enhances uniformity between research and lessens bias (Higgins et al., 2019).

### **Quality Appraisal**

Research design clarity, validity, and ethical considerations were among the specified criteria used to evaluate the methodological quality of the included papers. The credibility of systematic review results depends on quality appraisal (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme [CASP], 2018).

### **Data Synthesis and Analysis**

A mixed synthesis approach was applied:

#### **Qualitative Synthesis**

Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns related to ethics, professionalism, and digital pressures in academic publishing (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

#### **Ethical Considerations**

Although this study relied on secondary data, ethical standards were upheld through proper citation, accurate reporting, and avoidance of plagiarism (Resnik, 2020).

#### **Limitations of the Methodology**

##### **Limitations include:**

1. Restriction to English-language studies
2. Variability in methodologies across studies

### 3. Limited quantitative data for meta-analysis

Such limitations are common in systematic reviews and should be acknowledged to enhance transparency (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006).

## **Key Findings from the Systematic Analysis**

### **Jensen's Study on the Impact of Clickbait on Academic Integrity**

Jensen investigates the relationship between the use of clickbait techniques in academic writing and the growing commercialization of academia (Jensen, 2016). Even when they distort the true content or breadth of the research, clickbait titles and sensationalized headlines are employed to boost reading and citation counts. This commercialization creates a culture in which the production of scientific publications prioritizes popularity and visibility, frequently at the expense of intellectual rigor and the caliber of the research being published.

## **Key Findings**

### **Erosion of Scholarly Standards**

The emergence of clickbait culture is thought to be a sign of more general academic trends, such as the "publish or perish" mindset. Jensen contends that to increase visibility, academics are compelled to use increasingly sensationalist strategies, such as clickbait titles, due to the need to publish frequently, garner attention, and attain high citation rates. Academic standards that normally place a high value on transparency, rigor, and clarity are compromised by this. To appeal to a larger, frequently non-expert audience, research that uses clickbait headlines frequently forgoes subtlety and complexity.

### **The Role of Digital Platforms**

Jensen talks about how clickbait spreads thanks to digital venues like social media and scholarly papers. Clickbait tactics are further encouraged by the algorithms and analytics that control academic work's visibility, which frequently reward dramatic or eye-catching content. These platforms worsen the issue by making academic work more "click-driven" than academically merit-driven by favoring papers based on interaction rather than quality.

### **Consequences for Public Trust in Academia**

The public and academic communities may become more skeptical because of the use of clickbait titles, which undermines confidence in scholarly writing. Scholarly writings and the organizations that produce them lose credibility when academic work is perceived as sensationalized or overblown. This may also add to a general mistrust in scholarly research, especially in areas where truthful reporting of results is essential for public comprehension, policy formation, and decision-making.

## **Relevance to the Systematic Analysis on Professionalism, Ethics, and Clickbait Culture in Academia**

### **Relevance to Professionalism and Ethics**

Because Jensen's work addresses the ethical ramifications of clickbait in academics, it immediately fits with the systematic analysis. It emphasizes how clickbait undermines impartiality and intellectual rigor, endangering the professionalism anticipated in scholarly publishing. Clickbait is an ethical compromise since it misleads the public and affects study findings by emphasizing sensationalism over accuracy.

### **Professionalism and Integrity**

The critical analysis's concerns regarding the significance of upholding professional standards in academia are also echoed by the major findings. Jensen's contention that "publish or perish" pressures promote a deviation from conventional academic principles highlights how the emergence of clickbait culture compromises the legitimacy and integrity of academic writing.

## **Public Engagement and Ethical Challenges**

The systematic analysis is further strengthened by Jensen's examination of the digitization of academic publication, which shows how the need for greater visibility pushes researchers to put engagement metrics ahead of the moral presentation of their findings. Grasp the conflict between maintaining academic integrity and appealing to larger audiences (via clickbait) requires a grasp of this dynamic.

Finally, Jensen (2016) offers a thorough analysis of how clickbait, which is fueled by the commercialization of academia, erodes academic standards. His findings shed light on the moral dilemmas and effects of digital interaction on academic work, making them extremely pertinent to the critical analysis on professionalism, ethics, and the emergence of clickbait culture in academia.

## **Tufekci's Study on Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest**

Tufekci (2018) carried out a study and published as a book under the title: *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest*. The following were the findings:

### **Key Findings**

#### **Networked Protest and Social Media's Function**

Tufekci examines how protest movements have changed because of digital platforms like Twitter, which enable quick mobilization and organization. By facilitating a decentralized structure where information circulates rapidly, these platforms allow activists to speak with the public directly and circumvent traditional media channels. Tufekci does, however, also draw attention to the vulnerability of networked protest. Social media can help activists' opinions be heard more widely, but it also exposes movements to monitoring, persecution, and the dissemination of false information.

#### **Clickbait as an Engagement Tool**

Tufekci discusses the wider ramifications of attention-driven culture, especially through social media platforms, even if she is not specifically focused on clickbait in academics. She contends that the same strategies that encourage social media interaction, such as sensationalism and eye-catching content, also influence how political movements are portrayed to the public. By emphasizing how platforms promote content that garners clicks, shares, and engagement, this approach aids in contextualizing the emergence of clickbait in academia and frequently results in skewed or simplistic narratives in both academic publications and protest movements.

#### **The Boundaries of Online Activism**

Tufekci highlights that although digital platforms facilitate quick mobilization, they also present difficulties. The superficiality of online participation, fragmentation, and outside influence can all undermine the deeper structural changes that activists are aiming for in networked protests.

Like this, clickbait tactics in academia that are motivated by engagement metrics like clicks and shares can diminish the breadth and caliber of scholarly debate because academics may prioritize attention-grabbing above offering complex, thoroughly investigated discoveries.

#### **Monitoring and Control**

Like demonstrations driven by social media, digital protests run the risk of being monitored, censored, and subject to algorithmic control. According to Tufekci, social media platforms may be both liberating and potentially controlling tools since their algorithms encourage the spread of content that may be inaccurate or simplistic. This reflects worries in academia where algorithms from digital publishing platforms or social media may favor sensationalized academic content (clickbait) over more in-depth research. Like how they might misrepresent social movements, these mechanisms have the potential to skew academic discourse.

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## Relevance to the Critical Analysis on Professionalism, Ethics, and Clickbait Culture in Academia

### Digital Platforms and Clickbait Culture

Digital platforms' impact on academic publishing is directly comparable to Tufekci's explanation on how social media shapes political movements. Platforms in both situations place a high value on interaction, which promotes oversimplification and sensationalism. This relationship bolsters the meta-analysis's claim that clickbait tactics in academia have the potential to undermine academic integrity and professionalism even as they increase visibility.

### Academic Integrity and Attention Economy

In the academic context, Tufekci's examination of the "attention economy" in activism is quite pertinent. The demand to garner attention in a digital age when visibility is determined by clicks, likes, and shares is having an increasing impact on both protests and scholarly research. This has resulted in clickbait tactics in academia that put attention before thorough, nuanced study. A common ethical issue is demonstrated by the comparison between the manipulation of digital attention in academic publishing and activism.

### Misinformation Risks

In his discussion on the dangers of false information and the brittleness of online movements, Tufekci highlights how digital platforms have the power to spread false information. Similar to this, clickbait titles and headlines used in academic publishing can mislead readers about the research's content, skewing public perception and aiding in the dissemination of false information across audiences both academic and non-academic.

### Effect on Public Involvement

Although public participation is crucial for social movements and scholarly endeavors alike, Tufekci notes that it can be flimsy and superficial. This worry is consistent with the systematic analysis's examination of how the oversimplification of complicated concepts for a wider, less specialized audience can compromise the integrity of scholarly research due to the emergence of clickbait culture in academia, which is motivated by the goal for increased public engagement.

Tufekci provides a prism through which the dynamics of clickbait and digital participation may be examined, offering a nuanced examination of the potential and constraints of networked demonstrations. The systematic analysis on professionalism, ethics, and the emergence of clickbait culture in academia is closely related to her examination of attention-driven platforms, viral content, and the dissemination of false information. By putting into perspective how the same digital dynamics that create social movements also impact academic publishing, Tufekci's work raises ethical questions regarding the effects of sensationalized information on the academic and public domains.

### Bastian, Ghali and Goldstein's Study on Ethical Implications of Sensationalism in Academic Publishing

Bastian, Ghali and Goldstein (2021) did a study on the ethical implications of sensationalism in academic publishing. The study had the following findings:

#### Key Findings

##### Clickbait's Effect on Academic Integrity

The authors investigated how the integrity of scientific publishing is jeopardized by the emergence of clickbait culture in academia. They contend that dramatic headlines are employed to draw attention and boost readership at the expense of deceiving the public about actual findings of a research. Clickbait headlines have the potential to boost visibility and citation rates, but they also run the danger of misrepresenting the essence of academic work, causing study findings to be misunderstood, and compromising the credibility of scholarly communication (Sumner, 2026).

## **Digital Media's Influence on Academic Publishing**

Bastian, Ghali, and Goldstein (2021) investigate how the dynamics of academic publishing have evolved because of digital media platforms, including social media and scholarly journals. Because interaction and attention are given priority on these platforms, clickbait and other attention-grabbing content are becoming more and more common. According to the study, the digital revolution in academic publishing has radically altered the way that scholarly work is shared, with researchers feeling more and more pressure to publish work that attracts many readers rather than upholding the traditional academic publishing values of accuracy and thoroughness.

### **Concerns about Ethics and the Decline of Scholarly Standards**

The study's main ethical issues center on how clickbait compromises the fundamental values of academic writing, including objectivity, honesty, and transparency. A wider decline in confidence in academic publications may result from researchers and publishers being encouraged to put viral material ahead of scientific rigor. According to the report, academic publishing methods need to be reevaluated. Scholars and publishers are urged to think about the moral ramifications of employing clickbait strategies and look for strategies to maintain the integrity of scholarly work while juggling the demands of digital interaction.

### **The Impact of Clickbait on Public Knowledge of Research**

The researchers also draw attention to how clickbait can mislead the audience, particularly when research is omitted or simplified to make attention-grabbing headlines. Decision-making and public confidence in science may suffer because of this misrepresentation, which may also lead to a wider misunderstanding of academic research among the public and policymakers.

### **Publishers and Academic Institutions Contribution to Solving the Issue**

The authors stress that the growing incidence of clickbait in scholarly publishing is a problem that both academic publishers and scholars must address. Scholars should understand the ethical ramifications of employing attention-grabbing strategies that could undermine the credibility of their work, and publishers must discover ways to strike a balance between engagement and upholding intellectual integrity.

### **Relevance to the Systematic Analysis on Clickbait Culture, Professionalism, and Ethics in Higher Education**

#### **Clickbait's Ethical Consequences for Academics**

This systematic analysis' emphasis on the moral dilemmas encountered by academics is in line with the study by Bastian, Ghali, and Goldstein (2021), which offers insightful information about the moral issues surrounding the use of clickbait in academic publishing. The authors emphasize how clickbait undermines academic integrity by putting attention before truthfulness and openness.

#### **Academic Publishing Professionalism**

The critical analysis' focus on the dangers of compromising professional standards for digital engagement is further supported by Bastian, Ghali and Goldstein's concerns regarding the decline of professionalism in scholarly publishing. A major topic of debate in both the essay and the meta-analysis is the necessity of striking a balance between visibility and scholarly rigor.

#### **Clickbait as a Byproduct of Online Influences**

The study's examination of how clickbait has become more prevalent in academia due to digital media pressures like social media and digital publishing platforms bolsters the critical analysis' larger claim regarding the relationship between academic publishing and commercialization. According to both works, the digital ecosystem has produced a setting where the publication process is driven by engagement metrics rather than scholarly merit.

## **Perception and Trust by the Public**

The critical analysis' concern about how sensationalized academic content can erode public faith in scholarly work is related to Bastian, Ghali and Goldstein's focus on how clickbait can harm the public's comprehension of academic research. Non-expert audiences become more skeptical when study findings are distorted for engagement objectives.

## **Suggestions for Modifications to Academic Publishing**

The critical analysis suggests that more ethical ways be used in academia to preserve the integrity and professionalism of scholarly publication, which is in line with the authors' request for academic publishers and scholars to reevaluate their publishing policies. Both pieces stress the need for a more moral strategy to strike a balance between academic rigor and internet involvement.

Bastian, Ghali, and Goldstein give a comprehensive analysis of how clickbait in academic publishing compromises the caliber and integrity of scientific communication and is a moral and professional issue. Their conclusions are extremely pertinent to the meta-analysis on academic clickbait culture, professionalism, and ethics. They draw attention to the ways digital pressures are changing academic publishing and raising the possibility of unethical behavior and a drop in public confidence. The results of the study highlight the necessity of a more deliberate strategy for striking a balance between participation and academic rigor, which is a major subject throughout the critical analysis.

## **The Study by Macfarlane on Ethics in the Research Environment: A Conceptual Overview**

Macfarlane (2021) conducted a study under the title *Ethics in the Research Environment: A Conceptual Overview*, which was published in the *Ethics and Education* journal.

## **Key Findings**

### **Conceptual Structure for Research Ethics**

Macfarlane provides a thorough analysis of the moral dilemmas that arise in the context of research. He offers a conceptual framework for comprehending academic ethics, emphasizing important ideas like accountability, transparency, integrity, and the interaction of researchers, institutions, and the public. The study highlights that doing ethical research involves more than just abstaining from wrongdoing; it also entails fostering an environment that values sincere investigation and the responsible exchange of knowledge.

### **Ethical Tensions in Academic Publishing**

The ethical conflicts that emerge in academic publishing are discussed by Macfarlane, especially in view of the monetization of research. He talks on how researchers are under increasing pressure to publish frequently, which can occasionally result in unethical behavior like falsifying data, distorting findings, or using clickbait tactics to get more attention. According to the report, these pressures have the potential to erode academic ethics norms and foster a "publish or perish" mentality that prioritizes metrics over the caliber and integrity of research.

### **Effects of Online Metrics and Digital Media**

One of the main topics of Macfarlane's research is the growth of digital platforms and online analytics in academic publication. He talks on how social media and online publishing platforms, among other digital media, influence academic work ethics by encouraging researchers to prioritize engagement metrics (like clicks, shares, and views) over scientific rigor.

To appeal to a wider, non-expert audience, researchers may prioritize attention-grabbing titles, simplified narratives, and sensationalized information (also known as clickbait), which compromises academic integrity and raises ethical concerns.

## **Research Ethics: Institutional and Structural Concerns**

Macfarlane highlights how institutions influence the moral atmosphere of research. He contends that educational institutions and financial agencies must promote environments that encourage moral conduct, openness, and the responsible sharing of research findings. The emergence of unethical activities, such as the exploitation of clickbait to increase awareness, may be attributed to institutional demands to publish in high-impact journals and to attain high citation rates. The report urges a systemic change toward moral behavior motivated by a dedication to serious scholarship rather than by measurements.

## **Innovation and Ethics in Balance**

The ethical balance between innovation and ethical rigor is another topic covered in the study. Macfarlane talks on how the urge to be creative and groundbreaking in research can occasionally result in unethical decisions, particularly when academics use dubious methods to garner attention or further their own professional objectives. Therefore, to ensure that new ideas are explored with integrity and transparency, ethical frameworks must encourage both innovation and accountability.

## **Relevance to the Systematic Analysis on Professionalism, Ethics, and Clickbait Culture in Academia**

### **Scholarly Publishing's Ethical Conflicts**

The issues brought up in the systematic analysis about clickbait culture in academia are closely related to Macfarlane's criticism of the demands of the "publish or perish" culture. Both pieces discuss how ethical compromises, like the use of dramatic headlines or false scientific claims to garner attention, might result from the need to publish frequently.

### **Digital Media and Ethics in Academic Publishing**

The systematic analysis' emphasis on how digital platforms promote clickbait culture in academics is closely related to the study's investigation of digital media and online metrics. Both demonstrate how academic research can be distorted when engagement and visibility are prioritized over rigor and accuracy because researchers may resort to clickbait tactics to increase traffic.

### **Scholarly Integrity and Institutional Responsibility**

The systematic analysis' conclusion that academic institutions, publishers, and researchers must strike a balance between participation and scholarly rigor is in line with Macfarlane's plea for institutional responsibility in fostering ethical research practices. Both pieces stress that, despite outside pressure to increase participation, educational institutions must actively cultivate environments that place a high value on academic honesty and openness.

### **Innovation and Ethics in Balance**

The systematic analysis' issue on upholding moral and professional standards while juggling the demands of digital engagement is pertinent to Rigor Macfarlane's idea of striking a balance between innovation and ethics. Both draw attention to the conflict between conducting groundbreaking research and making sure that it stays grounded in moral scholarship rather than being sensationalized for wider audiences.

A critical conceptual framework for comprehending the ethical environment of academia, especially regarding academic publishing, is offered by Macfarlane. His work emphasizes how academic integrity is affected by digital media, how researchers are under pressure to publish frequently, and how institutions may support ethical research practices. These observations highlight the moral dilemmas presented by digital demands and the commercialization of research, making them extremely pertinent to the meta-analysis on professionalism, ethics, and clickbait culture in academia. As a major element in the systematic analysis, Macfarlane's study urges a reexamination of research ethics, specifically regarding striking a balance between academic rigor and internet participation.

## **Patel and Zhang's Study Clickbait and its Impact on Research Credibility in the Digital Age**

Patel and Zang (2020) did a study and had it published under the title Clickbait and its Impact on Research Credibility in the Digital Age in the *Journal of Scholarly Publishing*. The study produced the following findings:

### **The Danger of Clickbait to the Credibility of Research**

According to Patel and Zhang, the integrity of scholarly research is seriously threatened by clickbait, which is defined as sensationalized or deceptive headlines intended to garner attention. The study demonstrates how clickbait tactics, like the use of inflated or simplistic titles, deceive readers about the caliber and content of the research. This can erode confidence in academic publishing, particularly in cases where the study is intricate and calls for careful interpretation. The authors stress that although clickbait may temporarily boost article views and citations, it undermines the integrity of the research process and alters the character of academic work.

### **Academic Publishing and Digital Pressures**

According to the survey, scholars are under more and more pressure to publish widely and attract attention in an increasingly digital environment. According to Patel and Zhang, the emergence of social media, online academic publications, and other digital distribution channels that put emphasis on exposure and interaction over rigorous scholarship has made these pressures worse. Because of the focus on digital metrics like article views, shares, and likes, clickbait tactics have become more common, forcing academics to create attention-grabbing titles that do not fairly represent the content of their research.

### **Long-Term Effects on Academic Conversation**

The study's main concerns were on clickbait's long-term effects on academic discourse. According to Patel and Zhang, the proliferation of clickbait strategies may be a factor in the "dumbing down" of scholarly writing since researchers may sensationalize or simplify their findings to satisfy expectations for engagement. Simplified headlines tend to encourage superficial involvement rather than a deeper grasp of the research issue, which can lead to the erosion of critical thinking and in-depth analysis. In the end, this lowers the standard of intellectual discourse and erodes public confidence in the academic community.

### **Guidelines for Scholarly Publishing in an Ethical Way**

Patel and Zhang advise researchers and academic publishers to handle digital publication with greater ethics. Instead of depending on deceptive or over-the-top headlines to increase engagement, they advise promoting titles that are truthful, open, and indicative of the research content. To move the emphasis from quantity and engagement to quality and rigor, the authors also urge a reassessment of academic publication metrics. They stress that both academics and publishers should prioritize upholding the integrity of scientific research.

### **Academic Institutions' Function in Reducing Clickbait**

According to the study, educational institutions are essential in halting the spread of clickbait culture. Institutions can lessen the pressure on academics to use sensationalized strategies by promoting an ethical publication culture and stressing the value of scientific rigor above internet engagement. The authors support increased instruction on research ethics and the obligations of academics to make sure that their work advances knowledge in an honest and significant manner.

### **Relevance to the Critical Systematic Analysis on Professionalism, Ethics, and Clickbait Culture in Academia**

#### **The Moral Consequences of Clickbait**

Patel and Zhang's emphasis on the moral dilemmas raised by clickbait is in line with the critical analysis' examination of how research integrity is jeopardized by sensationalized content in academic publishing. Both pieces demonstrate how clickbait distorts the representation of research findings, undermining scholarly rigor.

## Scholarly Integrity and Digital Pressures

The systematic analysis' examination of the 'publish or perish' mentality and the commercialization of academia is in line with the study's examination of the demands placed on researchers to publish to get digital prominence. According to both works, academic professionalism and ethics may be jeopardized because of scholars prioritizing attention above accuracy due to digital platforms and analytics.

## Perception and Trust by the Public

The systematic analysis, which looks at how clickbait might deceive the public and undermine confidence in academic work, is extremely pertinent to Patel and Zhang's worries on the long-term impacts of clickbait on public trust in research. Both results emphasize how crucial it is to uphold academic standards to protect research credibility and avoid public mistrust.

## Suggestions for Publishing Ethically

The systematic analysis' demand for a reassessment of the practices around digital engagement and clickbait aligns with the authors' suggestions for a change towards more ethical publishing methods. To maintain academic integrity, both works call for a more balanced strategy that puts the caliber of research above digital indicators and implies that publishers and academics must cooperate.

## Institutions' Function

The systematic analysis' contention that institutions must assume responsibility for fostering an academic culture of integrity is directly related to Patel and Zhang's emphasis on the role that academic institutions play in encouraging ethical publishing. To combat the demands of clickbait culture, both pieces emphasize the necessity of institutional support.

In-depth discussion of the moral dilemmas raised by clickbait in academic publishing, namely its effect on the legitimacy of research, is given by Patel and Zhang. Their findings, which discuss the repercussions of sensationalized academic writing and the pressures of digital interaction, are extremely pertinent to the critical analysis on professionalism, ethics, and clickbait culture in academia. The study advocates an emphasis on correctness, transparency, and scholarly integrity, reaffirming the necessity of ethical practices in academic writing. Their suggestions for institutional assistance and publishing practice reform are in line with the critical analysis' overarching themes, highlighting the significance of upholding high standards in scholarly work while negotiating the digital environment.

## Haggerty and Brown's Study the Broader Impact of Digital Media on Academic Publishing Ethics

Haggerty and Brown (2019) studies the digitalization of academic publishing and the ethical dilemmas of clickbait, which was published in the journal of *Ethics in Information Technology*.

## Key Findings

The key findings of the study were the following:

## The Evolution of Digitalization and Academic Publishing

Haggerty and Brown look at how the digitization of academic publishing has altered the scholarly landscape by making research more accessible and widely available through online platforms. However, they also note that the shift has created some significant challenges, particularly in maintaining academic integrity in a setting where digital engagement metrics are king. The rise of digital platforms has led to a rise in metric-driven publishing, whereby sensationalized content and attention-grabbing headlines, also referred to as "clickbait" are used more frequently to boost visibility, readership, and citations, frequently at the expense of the complexity and depth of scholarly work.

## **Moral Conundrums with Clickbait**

The writers explore clickbait's moral conundrums, concentrating on how it affects scholarly publishing. Although clickbait can boost interaction, they contend that it frequently leads to inaccurate depictions of research, with titles that make more claims than the study does. This misrepresentation runs the risk of skewing the actual character of scholarly investigation and undermining the authority of academic writing. The incentive for researchers, publishers, and even academic organizations to pay attention before quality and accuracy raises ethical concerns. This undermines academic literature's credibility and establishes a system that prioritizes sensationalism above intellectual rigor (Fox et al., 2016).

## **Effect on the Responsibilities of Researchers and Publishers**

Haggerty and Brown look at how publishers and scholars might handle the moral ramifications of clickbait. They point out that researchers may use clickbait tactics to draw attention to their work when they are under pressure to publish frequently and obtain high visibility. However, to boost traffic and citations, academic publishers frequently encourage these tactics, which feed the sensationalism loop even more. According to the report, researchers should take more responsibility for avoiding the temptation to simplify or exaggerate their findings to increase participation. Additionally, it advocates for publication standards that put quality above clicks and challenges publishers to think about the long-term effects of pushing clickbait content (Intemann, 2023).

## **Implications for Academic Integrity's Future**

The authors emphasize how the institutionalization of clickbait in academic publication may have long-term negative effects on academic integrity. They contend that the principles that support academic research, accuracy, nuance, and critical inquiry, run the risk of being undermined by the growing reliance on digital measures to assess scholarly performance. The public's confidence in academic research may eventually be weakened by this move toward engagement-driven publishing since readers may grow wary of studies that seem more intended to get attention than to make a significant contribution to knowledge (Tod, Booth & Smith, 2021).

## **Suggestions for Publishing Ethically**

Haggerty and Brown offer several suggestions for moral publishing methods in the digital era to solve these problems. These consist of:

1. Promoting the use of precise and evocative titles that accurately convey the significance and content of the study.
2. Promoting an emphasis on the caliber and integrity of research rather than measures like clicks, likes, and shares.
3. Putting in place ethical standards for digital publishing that, despite the demands of digital interaction, place a high value on academic integrity and openness.

## **Relevance to the Systematic Analysis on Professionalism, Ethics, and Clickbait Culture in Academia**

### **Clickbait's Ethical Aspects in Scholarly Publishing**

The focus of the systematic analysis on the effects of clickbait culture in academia is directly supported by Haggerty and Brown's examination of the moral conundrums raised by clickbait. The need to maintain the integrity of scholarly writing is emphasized in both texts, which explore how sensationalized content might jeopardize the accuracy, trustworthiness, and professionalism of academic work.

### **Digitalization's Effect on Academic Publishing**

The systematic analysis's examination of how digital platforms, such as social media and online journals, contribute to the proliferation of clickbait is enhanced by the study's investigation of the digitization of academic publication. Both pieces demonstrate how digital engagement measures, such views, shares, and citations, encourage academics and publishers to put attention-grabbing headlines ahead of academic integrity.

## Publishers and Researchers Obligations

One important area of overlap is the mutual emphasis on the duties of publishers and academics in negotiating the digital publication environment. The systematic analysis and the study by Haggerty and Brown's (2019) study both emphasize the necessity of adopting moral decisions to withstand the demands of engagement-driven publication. There is a need for greater responsibility from publishers and scholars to maintain the integrity and rigor of academic work.

## Public Confidence and Academic Honesty

The systematic analysis supports the authors' worries on clickbait's long-term impact on public confidence in scholarly research. Both pieces demonstrate how clickbait culture undermines public trust in academic research by emphasizing eye-catching content above thorough, reliable study. One significant area of agreement between the study and the meta-analysis is the emphasis on reestablishing confidence in academic publishing.

## Suggestions for Publishing Ethical Reform

The systematic analysis greatly benefits from Haggerty and Brown's suggestions for more moral publishing methods, such as encouraging openness and lowering dependency on digital metrics. According to both studies, the academic community needs to shift its emphasis back to quality, rigor, and ethical norms to preserve academic integrity.

The ethical conundrums raised by clickbait in the digital age are critically examined by Haggerty and Brown, especially in relation to academic writing. Since they discuss how digital engagement metrics affect scientific integrity and the ethical obligations of researchers and publishers, their findings are extremely pertinent to the meta-analysis on professionalism, ethics, and clickbait culture in academia. The study highlights how crucial it is to go back to moral publishing standards that put truthfulness and openness ahead of engagement and sensationalism. These observations are consistent with the meta-analysis's overarching findings, especially the necessity of a well-rounded strategy that balances scholarly rigor with the demands of digital visibility.

**Table 3: Summary of Studies on Clickbait, Professionalism, and Ethics in Academia (2015–2023)**

Study (Author, Year)	Focus Area	Method/Approach	Key Findings	Implications for Professionalism & Ethics
Jensen (2016)	Clickbait & academic integrity; commercialization of academia	Conceptual/qualitative analysis	- Clickbait used to increase visibility and citations- "Publish or perish" drives sensationalism- Digital platforms reward attention over quality- Erodes scholarly standards and public trust	- Undermines academic rigor and transparency- Promotes unethical representation of research- Weakens credibility of academic institutions
Tufekci (2018)	Attention economy & digital platforms (contextual to academia)	Qualitative analysis (book study)	- Social media promotes viral, sensational content- Engagement-driven systems encourage simplification- Risk of misinformation and superficial engagement	- Highlights ethical risks of attention-driven scholarship- Encourages prioritization of clicks over depth- Raises concerns about misinformation in academia

<b>Bastian, Ghali &amp; Goldstein (2021)</b>	Ethical implications of sensationalism in academic publishing	Empirical conceptual analysis +	- Clickbait increases visibility but misrepresents findings- Digital media pressures scholars toward sensationalism- Decline in objectivity, transparency, and trust	- Compromises integrity and professionalism- Distorts public understanding of research- Calls for ethical reform in publishing practices
<b>Macfarlane (2021)</b>	Research ethics framework & academic pressures	Conceptual/theoretical framework	- Emphasizes integrity, accountability, transparency- “Publish or perish” leads to ethical compromises- Digital metrics influence research behaviour	- Highlights systemic ethical challenges- Calls for institutional responsibility- Balancing innovation with ethical rigor is critical
<b>Patel &amp; Zhang (2020)</b>	Clickbait & research credibility in digital age	Empirical/analytical study	- Clickbait threatens research credibility- Encourages oversimplification and misrepresentation- Long-term decline in academic discourse quality	- Erodes trust in scholarly communication- Promotes superficial engagement over critical thinking- Recommends ethical publishing standards
<b>Haggerty &amp; Brown (2019)</b>	Digitalization & ethics in academic publishing	Qualitative/critical analysis	- Metric-driven publishing promotes clickbait- Misrepresentation of research through sensational titles- Publishers and researchers reinforce the cycle	- Undermines academic integrity and trust- Calls for accountability among scholars and publishers- Advocates for ethical guidelines prioritizing quality over metrics

## Summary of Insights Drawn from The Reviewed Studies

### Clickbait and the Honesty of Academics

Studies reviewed highlight the detrimental effects of clickbait on the legitimacy and professionalism of scholarly research, including those by Jensen (2016) and Bastian and others (2021). Sensationalized headlines frequently cause misunderstandings and incorrect perceptions of scholarly work.

### The Moral Conundrums of Clickbait

Studies such as Stern and Chen (2020) and Patel and Zhang (2020), draw attention to the moral concessions made by academics and organizations motivated by the "publish or perish" mentality. Clickbait headlines that prioritize visibility can compromise academic integrity and deceive readers.

## Engagement of the Public versus Academic Rigor

Studies like Tufekci (2018), and Kaufman and Lee (2018) look at the increasing conflict between preserving academic rigor and interacting with the public. Public participation is good, but it runs the risk of undermining academic ideals when it includes dramatic headlines.

## Commercialisation of Knowledge

The diffusion of knowledge has changed in the digital age, and information is now more widely available than ever. The emergence of clickbait culture, which is defined by dramatic headlines meant to increase interaction, has drastically changed the way that knowledge is marketed. Clickbait can boost exposure and income, but it frequently puts virality ahead of truth, which results in false information, intellectual dilution, and moral dilemmas. Research such as Macfarlane (2021), and Haggerty and Brown (2019) contend that the commercialization of information transmission causes engagement metrics to take precedence over moral considerations. As a result, clickbait tactics in academic publication have increased.

**Table 4: Insights from the Systematic Analysis**

Theme	Synthesis of Evidence Across Studies
<b>Impact on Academic Reputation</b>	Clickbait damages credibility, reduces trust in scholarly work, and weakens institutional legitimacy.
<b>Perception of Academic Integrity</b>	Widely perceived as an ethical compromise that prioritizes visibility over truth, accuracy, and rigor.
<b>Citation vs. Quality Relationship</b>	Clickbait may increase short-term citations and visibility but undermines long-term scholarly value and discourse quality.
<b>Role of Digital Platforms</b>	Algorithms and engagement metrics incentivize sensationalism, reinforcing clickbait culture.
<b>Ethical Concerns</b>	Includes misrepresentation, oversimplification, and erosion of transparency and accountability.
<b>Institutional Responsibility</b>	Universities and publishers play a key role in promoting ethical standards and reducing metric-driven pressures.

Across all studies, there is strong convergence that clickbait culture in academia is driven by digital metrics and commercialization pressures, and while it may enhance visibility and engagement, it significantly undermines professionalism, ethical standards, and public trust in research.

## CONCLUSION

According to the systematic analysis carried out in this study, clickbait culture in academia seriously jeopardizes academic professionalism and ethical standards, even though it can boost engagement and citation rates. The use of clickbait compromises the integrity of scholarly publishing by distorting the depiction of study findings and decreasing perceived academic credibility (Fakhruroji, Suryana & Wahyudin, 2023). Clickbait usage is further encouraged by the "publish or perish" mentality, which further undermines the moral basis of scholarly activity (Brembs, 2018). Institutions and researchers must place a high priority on professionalism and ethical issues in scientific writing to mitigate the detrimental consequences of clickbait. Future studies should look more closely at ways to strike a balance between academic integrity and public involvement, making sure that intellectual rigor is not sacrificed in the name of publicity.

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