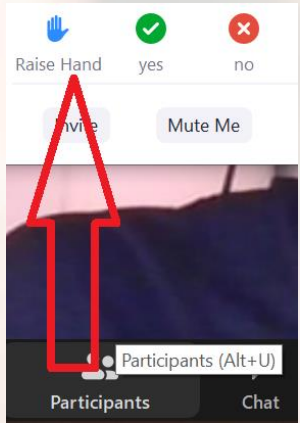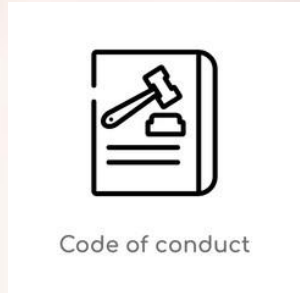# ETHICS OF RESEARCH OF RESEARCH IN THE DIGITAL AGE AND COVID-19 ERA

Impact of digitalization on ethics of research

Michael Twum-Darko PhD, FIAP, tssf
Chairperson: Faculty Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Business and Management Sciences
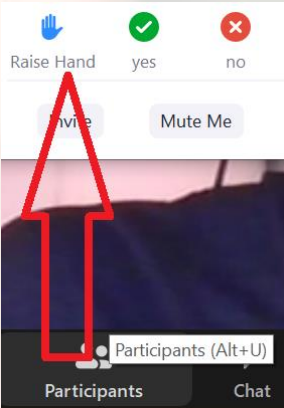**Cape Peninsula University of Technology**

Impact of digitalization on ethics of research

Background to digitalization on internationalization of PhD

➢ Internationalization of PhD is the preparation of PhD candidates to function in an increasingly international and culturally relevant and diverse environment;

➢ PhD candidates conducting research that cuts across international borders with cultural differences must apply different ethical protocols;

➢ In digitalization and COVID-19 environment of the world, the PhD candidate must develop different skills to manage self ethically, professionally and in a clinically sound manner when on online and digital media;

➢ Drawing from Iqbal and Beigh (2017), applying ethics in digital transformation is more difficult than in other disciplines;

➢ Digitalization has altered extensively the relationships among people. Personal contact has reduced, and the speed of communication often does not give the participant time to reflect on the possibility or implications of unethical use.

➢ In digitalization, information is far more "fragile" than when it is on paper. It is more easily changed and more vulnerable to unauthorized access. The questions of property rights, plagiarism, piracy, confidentiality and privacy become active issues.
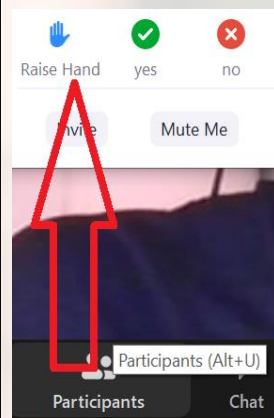
Raise Hand   yes   no

Mute Me

Participants (Alt+U)

Participants   Chat

Code of conduct

higher education & training
Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

science & technology
Department:
Science and Technology
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

NRF National Research Foundation

STINT
Stiftelsen för internationalisering av högre utbildning och forskning
The Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education

YEBO!

South Africa
Sweden
University Forum

➢ The ethical question the PhD candidate must answer when conducting research across international borders digitally is *"how do I represent myself and make choices that reveal, all the time, the aims and objectives of the research?"*

➢ How should the PhD Candidate represents him/her self across international borders?
   ❑ Stage 1: Obtain complete ethical clearance or conditional approval from resident Institution;

   ❑ Stage 2: Obtain the site permission requirements from the targeted Institution / organisation etc.;

   ❑ Stage 3: Submit the necessary/revenant document according to the site permission requirements of the targeted entity to the targeted entity's research ethics & Integrity office.
      ▪ NOTE (1): A copy of the ethical clearance from the resident institution must be attached.
      ▪ NOTE (2): Be aware of the ethics committee meeting times of the year.

Raise Hand   yes   no
Mute Me
Participants (Alt+U)
Participants   Chat

Code of conduct

YEBO!

higher education & training
Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

science & technology
Department:
Science and Technology
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

NRF National Research Foundation

STINT
Stiftelsen för internationalisering av högre utbildning och forskning
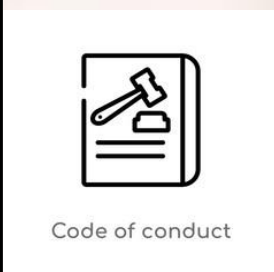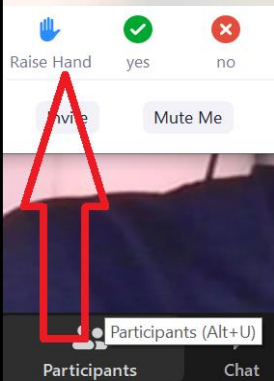The Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education

Representing self (PhD candidate) across international borders – Research Proposal-1

➢ **The Problem statement:**
  ✓ The problem statement must be clear and must exhibit or demonstrate novelty. The clarity and novelty is assessed by"

  • "what" is the problem? This is a claim that a problem exist and must be substantiated with at least 5 latest references not older than 5 years.

  • "how" is it a problem? Thus, what makes it a problem? It is also a claim that has to be substantiated with at least 5 latest references not older than 5 years.

  • "why" is it a problem? Thus, why has this problem not been solved or addressed and why you think this research will solve or address it? This is also a claim to be substantiated with at least 5 latest references not older than 5 years.

➢ **The Research aim:**
  ✓ The research aim and objectives must provide an indication of the ontological and epistemological position of the study **e.g., the aim is to explore … (Cronje, 2016; van Zyl, 2015)** which gives an indication of a subjective view of the problem and to be conducted using interpretive philosophy.
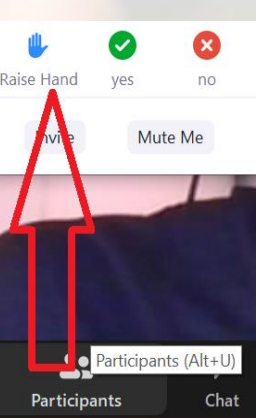
- **The Research Objectives and Questions**
  - ✓ The research objectives and questions must align and give meat to the ontological and epistemological position adopted
    - ▪ E.g., questions must be preceded with "what" and "how" given the example of "to explore …" as the aim **(Cronje, 2016; van Zyl, 2015, Burrell and Morgan, 1997)**
    - ▪ E.g., objectives will preferably be to "investigate" and the "determine"

- **The research approach/methodology**
  - ✓ Appropriate and clear description of the research strategy/design. *It forms the basis for site permission. Clarity is assessed based on why the targeted site and not any other site*;
  - ✓ Appropriate and clear description of sampling design and sufficient sample size;
  - ✓ Appropriateness and clarity of the study period;
  - ✓ Adequate description of data collection methods e.g., Focus group discussion, interview, observation, ethnography, deception, covert research;
  - ✓ Adequate description of appropriate data acquisition tools e.g., topic guides, questionnaires, checklist, debriefing sessions, audio/video taping, transcription
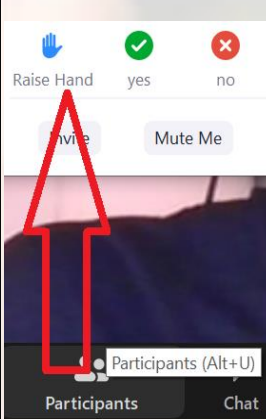
Impact of digitalization on ethics of research

➢ **Inclusion/exclusion criteria of participants**
- ✓ Clearly described study group and must be fair;
- ✓ Adequate description of the appropriateness of eligibility criteria;
- ✓ Clear description of recruitment procedure
- ✓ Clear description of considerations taken to avoid or minimize selection bias

➢ **Ethical considerations**
- ✓ Describe how the informed consent will adequately describe the main research procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect;
- ✓ Voluntary participation and participants withdrawal must be adequately described;
- ✓ If questionnaires are to be used, adequate description of participants option of omitting questions which they do not want to answer will be needed;
- ✓ Adequate and clear description of how confidentiality, anonymity and privacy of data will be maintained;
- ✓ Describe how you will debrief participants at the end of their participation
- ✓ Describe the risk (if any) of participants or researchers experiencing either physical or psychological distress or discomfort?

Raise Hand   yes   no
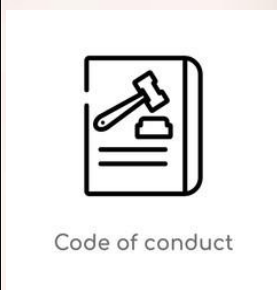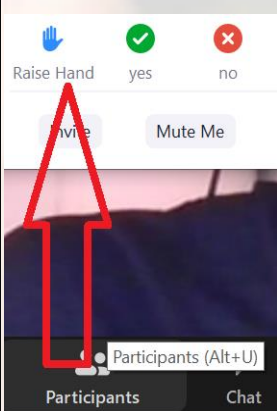
Invite   Mute Me

Participants (Alt+U)

Participants   Chat

Code of conduct

Impact of digitalization on ethics of research

Representing self (PhD candidate) across international borders – SAMPLE SITE PERMISSION

<<On company letterhead>>

Date:

I <<*insert name*>>, in my capacity as <<*insert position in company/institution*) at <<*insert company/Institution name*>> give consent in principle to allow <<*insert student name*>>, a student at <<name of institution>>, to collect data in this organization as part of his/her <<name of qualification>>. The student has explained to me the nature of his/her research and the nature of the data to be collected.

This consent in no way commits any individual staff member to participate in the research, and it is expected that the student will get explicit consent from any participant. I reserve the right to withdraw this permission at some future time.

In addition, the company's name may or may not be used as indicated below. (Tick as appropriate).

	Thesis	Conference paper	Journal article	Research poster
Yes				
No				

<<signature of a senior person>>
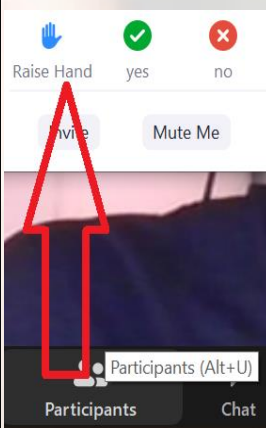
_____

<<Insert name>>

_____

<<insert date>>

Impact of digitalization on ethics of research

Reference list

Burrell G. and Morgan G. (1979). Sociological Paradigms and Organizational Analysis. London: Heinemann Books.

Cronjé, J. (2013). What Is This Thing Called "Design" in Instructional Design Research? The ABC Instant Research Question Generator. In *Media in Education,* Springer New York, 15-28.

Cronje, J. (2016). Towards an integration of paradigmatic and pragmatic research in information systems, *The Electronic Journal of Information Systems in Developing Countries,* 77(9), 1-14

Iqbal, J. and Beigh, B.M. (2017). Computer Ethics from Obscure to Ubiquitous, *International Journal of Advanced Research in Computer Science,* 8(3), 983-990

Van Zyl, I. (2015). Disciplinary kingdoms: navigating the politics of research Philosophy in the information systems, *The Electronic Journal of Information Systems in Developing Countries,* 70 (1), 1-17