



2025, 14 (3), 1901-1917 | Research Article

Ethics in Qualitative Research

Mehmet Demirhan ¹

Abstract

Ethical issues are matters that all researchers conducting scientific work must pay attention to. When examining the history of science, it is evident that it is rife with unethical behavior and practices. Ethical issues in qualitative research have often been a source of concern for qualitative researchers, and qualitative research raises different ethical issues. This is because qualitative research generally requires the collection of relatively unstructured data in natural settings and involves flexible research designs. In this regard, ethical behavior and principles in qualitative research are not limited to the behaviors and principles that researchers must pay attention to during the data collection process. These are points that researchers must pay attention to throughout all stages of research, from the process of determining the research design/topic to the publication process, and it is a great responsibility for qualitative researchers to uphold these principles. Since research often involves extensive collaboration between different individuals, disciplines, and institutions, ethical standards such as trust, accountability, mutual respect, and fairness are essential for studies. These ethical standards and norms ensure that researchers are held accountable to the public. Ethical shortcomings in research can cause significant harm to the public, participants, people, and animals. Qualitative researchers have argued against the historically dominant view that the most important purpose of research is to produce knowledge and protect human interests, stating that social research should be directed toward political and practical goals. Qualitative researchers are particularly committed to developing social justice by eliminating human rights violations and social inequalities, or by resisting or eliminating prevailing social structures. In this context, when designing and planning qualitative research, researchers must consider what kind of ethical problems may arise during the study and how these problems will be addressed. In this context, this study examines the ethical issues that researchers should pay attention to at every stage of qualitative research, presenting them step by step in detail. It highlights the importance of ethical issues by providing various examples of unethical practices in qualitative research. Furthermore, in the rapidly unfolding digital transformation process, attention is drawn to the different ethical problems that arise in the use of applications such as artificial intelligence.

Keywords: Ethics, Research, Study, Qualitative Research, Ethical Issues.

Demirhan, M. (2025). Ethics in Qualitative Research. Journal of the Human and Social Science Researches, 14(3), 1901-1917. <https://doi.org/10.15869/itobiad.1596716>

Date of Submission	05.12.2024
Date of Acceptance	15.09.2025
Date of Publication	30.09.2025
*This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC license.	

¹ Dr., MEB, Malatya, mhmtdmrhn44@hotmail.com, ORCID:0000-0003-3053-8875



2025, 14 (3), 1901-1917 | Araştırma Makalesi

Nitel Araştırmalarda Etik

Mehmet Demirhan¹

Öz

Etik hususlar, bilimsel çalışma yapan bütün araştırmacıların dikkat etmesi gereken konulardır. Bilim tarihi incelendiğinde etik dışı davranışlar ve uygulamalarla dolu olduğu görülmektedir. Nitel araştırmalarda etik konular ile ilgili hususlar nitel araştırmacılar için çoğu zaman endişe kaynağı olmuştur ve nitel araştırmalar, farklı etik sorunları gündeme getirmektedir. Çünkü nitel araştırmalar genellikle doğal ortamlarda, nispeten yapılandırılmamış verilerin toplanmasını gerektirmekte ve esnek çalışma dizaynları içermektedir. Bu bakımdan nitel araştırmalarda etik davranışlar ve ilkeler, sadece veri toplama sürecinde araştırmacının dikkat etmesi gereken davranış ve ilkeler değildir. Araştırma tasarımının/konusunun belirlenme sürecinde başlayıp yayımlanma sürecine kadar araştırmacının tüm aşamalarında araştırmacının dikkat etmesi gereken hususlardır ve nitel araştırmacıların bu ilkeleri korumaları büyük bir sorumluluktur. Araştırmalar genellikle farklı kişiler, farklı disiplinler ve farklı kurumlar arasında çok fazla işbirliği içerdiğinden güven, hesap verilebilirlik, karşılıklı saygı, adalet gibi etik standartlar çalışmalar için gereklidir. Bu etik standartlar ve normlar araştırmacıların kamuoyuna karşı sorumlu tutulmasını sağlar. Bir araştırmadaki etik eksiklikler halka, katılımcılara, insanlara ve hayvanlara önemli ölçüde zarar verebilir. Nitel araştırmacılar, geçmişte hakim olan araştırmanın en önemli amacının bilgi üretmek ve insan çıkarlarını gözetmektir, şeklindeki görüşlere karşı çıkarak sosyal araştırmaların siyasi ve pratik amaçlara yönlendirilmesi gerektiğini belirtmişlerdir Nitel araştırmacılar özellikle insan hakları ihlallerini ve sosyal eşitsizlikleri ortadan kaldırarak ya da hakim toplumsal düzenlemelere direnerek veya onları ortadan kaldırarak sosyal adaleti geliştirmeye yönelik bir tavır içerisinde. Bu pozisyon bağlamında nitel bir araştırmanın tasarlanma süreci ve planlanma sürecinde araştırmacılar, çalışma süresince ne tür etik problemlerin ortaya çıkacağını ve bu problemlerin nasıl ele alınacağını düşünmek mecburiyetindedirler. Bu kapsamda bu çalışmada nitel bir araştırmada, araştırmacıların çalışmanın her aşamasında dikkat etmesi gereken etik hususlar aşama aşama ele alınmış, ayrıntıları ile sunulmuş, nitel araştırmalarda ihlal edilen etik dışı çalışmalara çeşitli örnekler verilerek etik hususların önemine dikkat çekilmiştir. Ayrıca hızlı bir şekilde gerçekleşen dijital dönüşüm sürecinde, yapay zeka gibi uygulamaların kullanılmasında gündeme gelen farklı etik problemlere dikkat çekilmeye çalışılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Etik, Araştırma, Çalışma, Nitel Araştırma, Etik Hususlar.

Demirhan, M. (2025). Nitel Araştırmalarda Etik. İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Araştırmaları Dergisi, 14(3), 1901-1917. <https://doi.org/10.15869/itobiad.1596716>

Geliş Tarihi	05.12.2024
Kabul Tarihi	15.09.2025
Yayın Tarihi	30.09.2025
*Bu CC BY-NC lisansı altında açık erişimli bir makaledir.	

¹ Dr., Ministry of Education, Malatya, Türkiye, mhmtdmrhn44@hotmail.com ORCID:0000-0003-3053-8875

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to address in detail the ethical issues that researchers should pay attention to in qualitative research, to highlight the importance of ethical issues by providing various examples of unethical studies, and to draw attention to the different ethical problems that arise in the use of applications such as artificial intelligence in the rapidly occurring digital transformation process. The debate on right and wrong is as old as the history of writing (Sanjari et al. 2014, p. 2). Therefore, it can be said that ethical behavior has shaped human life since time immemorial. The term ethics has traditionally been associated with disciplines such as philosophy and theology. Over time, principles and rules related to specific moral and philosophical positions have been discussed and developed (Mauthner et al. 2002, p. 7). Even if scientists conduct their research independently, they also have the responsibility to examine the implications of the knowledge that may emerge on society and the environment and to warn about the consequences. Therefore, with the intensifying impact of technological and scientific developments on nature and society today, the social and ethical responsibilities of scientists are increasing (Turkish Academy of Sciences [TÜBA], 2002, p. 7). Yin (2011) stated that the key feature when working on a topic or doing any research is to maintain ethical codes (p. 25). At every stage of scientific research, ethical principles should guide the research and the researcher. History provides many grim examples of human rights violations. One particularly disturbing case occurred between 1932 and 1972, when over 400 African American individuals suffering from syphilis were intentionally denied treatment as part of a government-led medical study (Orb, Eisenhower & Wynaden, 2000, p. 93).

Ethical problems are not limited to quantitative research. Humphreys' (1970, p. 85) study on homosexuals is a good example of the ethical problems that can occur in qualitative research. In his study, Humphreys violated the principle of privacy, misinformed and deceived the participants. In the study, he secretly noted down the license plates of men who engaged in immoral sexual behaviors in public toilets, and then reached these people by obtaining the addresses of the license plate owners he recorded from the motor vehicles branch. He introduced himself as a person working in the health service and interviewed them. This study, which examined the homosexual behavior of men, won Humphreys an important award, but there are many problems in terms of ethical principles.

Ethical values are everywhere and permeate all aspects of our lives. For example, we demand justice as professors and parents, or we value honesty both in the quality of research and in our daily dealings with other people (Soltis, 1989, p. 125). Ethics is classically defined as doing good and avoiding harm (Beauchamp & Childress, 1989, p. 115). In social scientific research, on the other hand, ethics covers the rules that should be considered during the conduct of scientific research.

There is an increasing number of ethical regulations, and in light of these regulations, there is a growing interest in research ethics in the twenty-first century (Wiles, 2013, p. 1). Bogdan (2007) noted that the word ethics, like the words sex and snake, is exciting and enveloping in its hidden meaning and evocative in its emotional meaning. Bogdan added that nothing is more incriminating for a professional than being accused of unethical practices (p. 48). David & Resnik (2011) stated that an action can be legal but unethical or, conversely, illegal but ethical (p. 1). However, despite significant criticism

of the regulations, ethical review systems have become entrenched in most research institutions. This has increased the need for training and resources to improve researchers' awareness of ethical issues and ethical literacy (Wiles, 2013, p. 1).

There are important reasons to follow ethical norms in research. Ethical norms organize research goals such as achieving truth and knowledge and preventing errors. For example, they oppose fabrication, falsification, and misrepresentation of research data, promote truth and prevent error (David & Resnik, 2011, p. 1). Research ethics also refers to the concept of professional ethics. It deals with what social researchers should or should not do, or what is considered a vice and what is considered a virtue when conducting research (Hammersley & Traianou, 2017, p. 36). In this respect, all scientists should have professional ethics and uphold values based on honesty and trust.

Since research often involves extensive collaboration among diverse individuals, disciplines, and institutions, ethical standards such as trust, accountability, mutual respect, and fairness are crucial. These ethical standards and norms ensure that researchers are held accountable to the public. Ethical shortcomings in research can significantly harm the public, participants, humans, and animals (David & Resnik, 2011, p. 2). Glesne (2015) argued that ethical issues are not something that can be forgotten as soon as the demands and expectations of university ethics committees and key players in research management are met but are an integral part of the researcher's daily interactions with participants and data (p. 223). TÜBA (2002) stated that participants in scientific research should, without exception and at all times, adhere to the following basic principles (pp. 12-13):

- To have the highest professional standards in the design and conduct of research
- Honesty, openness and self-criticism in conducting the research and analyzing the findings
- To have an attitude that sincerely and openly acknowledges the contributions of other researchers who have worked and are working on the same topic and to fully maintain this attitude throughout the entire scientific article writing process.

Qualitative researchers have challenged the prevailing views of the past that the most important purpose of research is to produce knowledge and pursue human interests, and have argued that social research should be directed towards political and practical goals. In particular, they have an attitude towards promoting social justice by eliminating human rights violations and social inequalities or by resisting or eliminating dominant social arrangements (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017, p. 11). In the process of designing and planning a qualitative research in the context of this position, researchers have to think about what kind of ethical problems will arise during the study and how these problems will be addressed. It is a common misconception among researchers that ethical principles should be followed only during the data collection process (Creswell, 2020, p. 57). However, ethical principles cover the rules that should be taken into account at every stage of the research, starting from the design process to the publication process.

Similarly, open-ended interviewing has been criticized, especially by feminists, for encouraging the disclosure of experiences and backgrounds that participants wish to keep private through a false sincerity created by the interviewers (Finch, 1984, p. 72). Confidentiality is defined as the protection of the data and information shared by

participants and the inaccessibility of this information to others. If participants feel that the principle of confidentiality will be undermined, they may misinterpret or misleading information and distort their answers (Gliner, Morgan & Leech, 2015, p. 371-378). At this point, the trust, relationship and sincerity that the researchers will give to the participants are of great importance.

The neglect of ethical principles in qualitative research not only leads to the violation of individual rights, but also jeopardizes the validity and reliability of the research. In this context, questions such as how to apply ethical principles, what kind of ethical dilemmas may arise in which situations and how to deal with these dilemmas have still not found clear and universal answers in the literature. In particular, problems such as the reduction of informed consent to formality, participants' inability to fully comprehend the content of their consent, and the reflection of the researcher's subjective influences on data interpretation cause qualitative research to be questioned in terms of ethics. In this context, the main problem of this study is to identify and propose solutions to the difficulties experienced in the implementation of ethical principles in qualitative research in a consistent and context-sensitive manner in practice, although they are discussed at the theoretical level.

The main purpose of this study is to examine the ethical problems encountered in qualitative research from a holistic perspective and to propose feasible strategies for solving these problems. In particular, the study aims to evaluate issues such as power asymmetries in researcher-participant relationships, informed consent processes, protection of privacy and researcher reflexivity in an ethical context. In addition, the impact of technological developments on ethical practices and how to improve the principles of transparency in research are among the main areas of investigation of this study. Thus, it is aimed to increase ethical sensitivity in social sciences and contribute to the reliability of qualitative research.

In qualitative research, ethical challenges often arise in ways that are less straightforward than in quantitative studies. They're typically more nuanced and complex, because qualitative methods rely heavily on personal interactions, interviews, and interpretations. Unlike quantitative research, which tends to follow rigid procedures and numerical data collection, qualitative studies deal with subjective experiences, emotions, and relationships—making ethical boundaries harder to define and navigate (Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden, 2000, p. 93). In this respect, ethical principles are an inseparable part of qualitative research and are an integral part of qualitative research from the inception of the framework of research questions to the creation of the research design, the selection of the appropriate methodology, the selection of topics in the population to be studied, data collection, data analysis and the process of forming an inference (Paul & Bandyopadhyay, 2018, p. 45). In this context, the ethical issues and ethical behaviors that a qualitative researcher should pay attention to at all stages of the research process are mentioned below.

Ethical Issues in the Research Design Process

Research design and ethics are not one and the same. A design meets ethical standards that give the observer the ability to make prospective decisions about the balance of possibilities (Ramcharan & Cutcliffe, 2001, p. 360). Emphasizing that topic selection and method design an ethical issues, Glesne (2015) stated that the topic chosen for research

and the planning made are related to the ethical and philosophical stance that the researcher has about the nature and purpose of the research (p. 224).

Before entering the field, the qualitative researcher should consider to what extent and in what way the research design will affect the private lives, personal rights, and daily lives of the participants and whether it will pose any risk to the participants (Seggie & Bayyurt, 2017, pp. 15-16). In addition, before starting the study, the researcher should examine the ethical standards in professional fields and get information about these standards. They should submit their research for approval by the university/institute editorial board, obtain local permissions from the research setting and participants, and identify the team and assistants they will need. If the research team consists of more than one person, the person who will lead the research should be determined by the joint decision of everyone (Creswell, 2020, p. 59).

In many cases, current ethical codes fall short when it comes to addressing the emotional toll that researchers themselves may experience throughout the research process. This is especially true in qualitative research, where scholars often delve into deeply personal or sensitive topics. When studying individuals' private lives and experiences, and then presenting these findings to the public, researchers encounter a range of ethical challenges that cannot be fully managed by simply applying standard theories or written guidelines. Qualitative research, by its nature, requires a more flexible and sensitive ethical framework—one that goes beyond rigid protocols and instead embraces the dynamic reality of human interaction. Both researchers and participants engage in a process that calls for empathy, reflexivity, and an awareness of power dynamics. That's why ethical decision-making in this context must be guided by a practical understanding of lived experience and a commitment to critical reflection, rather than solely relying on abstract principles (Aluwihare, 2012, p. 66). Glesne (2015) stated that Ethics Committees should be guided by the following five basic principles in their evaluation of application proposals and decision-making processes (p. 225):

- Participants should be provided with sufficient information about the research topics to make informed decisions about their participation in the research.
- Research participants should be able to withdraw at any point in the research without any sanction.
- All unnecessary risks to research participants should be eliminated.
- The benefits of the research to society and to the participants should preferably both outweigh all possible risks.
- Experiments should only be conducted by researchers with proven competence.

Lincoln (1998) stated that "the question of whether researchers are ready to enter the field with a thesis or dissertation problem poses an ethical problem" (p. 323). A researcher who is sensitive to ethical values should pay attention to establishing a trusting relationship with participants, treating the research site and participants with respect, and planning not only entry into the field but also exit from the field (Seggie & Bayyurt, 2017, p. 46).

Ethical Issues in Research Initiation

Qualitative research aims to understand how individuals interpret and make sense of their personal experiences, emotions, and beliefs. It focuses on uncovering the meanings behind people's stories and giving voice to their perspectives, which are often complex and deeply personal. Because this type of research frequently involves close interaction between researchers and participants—and delves into sensitive or private matters—it can lead to a range of ethical concerns. Both parties may encounter emotional vulnerability, power imbalances, and dilemmas around confidentiality and consent, making ethical reflection and responsibility essential throughout the research process (Aluwihare, 2012, p. 64). The researcher who starts a qualitative study should first determine the purpose of the research. Then, with informed consent, which is one of the very important steps of research ethics, the researcher should inform the participants about the details, purpose, principles and methods of the research (Paul & Bandyopadhyay, 2018, p. 804). After the qualitative researcher comes together with the participants and informs them about the purpose of the research, he/she should tell them that they do not have to sign the consent form if they do not want to (Creswell, 2020, p. 59).

At this point, Glesne (2015) stated that informed consent cannot prevent the misuse of research findings and cannot create a symmetrical relationship between the researcher and the researched (p. 228). However, it does inform participants that participation will be voluntary, that some aspects of the research may affect the welfare of the participants, and that they can freely terminate their participation at any point in the research. This is because the term "participant" is a term that has been used relatively recently emphasizes a voluntary collaboration between the researcher and the researcher (Gliner, Morgan & Leech, 2015, p. 59). In this context, qualitative researchers should carefully identify and implement ways to protect the people who participate in their studies (Yin, 2011, p. 145).

Nespor & Groenke (2009) talk about an ethical framework, which they call the "problem framing" process, which includes who to consider as participants, how to frame the research questions, which temporal and spatial phenomena to take into account, etc. before starting face-to-face interviews with participants. According to Nespor & Groenke, this framing both presupposes and assists the researcher with particular frames of communicability (p. 996). Wiles (2013) stated that ethical frames are an occasion to think about moral behavior and ethical dilemmas, providing criteria for the researcher to think about what is right or wrong to do (p. 4).

In qualitative research, the researcher's professional commitment and close relationship with his/her profession is important and this may affect ethical issues (Baarnhielm & Ekblad, 2002, p. 478). The qualitative researcher should learn other different characteristics such as religion, gender, culture, etc. that are important for the participants and pay attention to these characteristics during the study process. In ethnographic studies, the researcher should respect the values, beliefs, norms, and laws of the local people. It should show the necessary sensitivity to special samples, for example, if it is going to conduct a study on children, it should obtain permission from parents. In studies conducted with prisoners, elderly people living in nursing homes, children staying in love homes, etc., the necessary approvals and permissions should be obtained from both the participants and the authorities of the institutions they are

affiliated with (Creswell, 2020, p. 58). Emphasizing that qualitative research plans change frequently, Glesne (2015) pointed out that obtaining one-time standard consent at the beginning of projects is potentially problematic, especially in long-term research. In this respect, it can be said that in long-term research, it would be more beneficial in terms of research ethics to obtain consent from participants again at several critical stages of the research (p. 229).

Ethical Considerations in the Data Collection Process

The classic and pervasive main purpose of qualitative research is to "describe a phenomenon from the participants' perspective through observation and interviews" (Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden, 2000, p. 94), using non-quantitative research methods and creating, using and adopting interpersonal, social, cultural, educational contextual contexts (Soltis, 1989, p. 125) in a way that is altogether more and richer than what quantitative research does. Accurate in this respect qualitative research methods can provide access to intimate aspects of life with an appropriate deep moral engagement (Baarnhielm & Ekblad, 2002, p. 472). This sincerity is important to accurately capture the participants' perspectives, but it is important to pay attention to ethical considerations at this point. Ensuring the safety and well-being of participants is an important element of ethical research practice (Wiles, 2013, p. 7).

Ethical considerations in a qualitative study have a particular resonance due to the depth of the study process. Especially in face-to-face interviews with vulnerable participant groups, the concern of ethical issues becomes more salient (Roshaidi, 2018, p. 31). The most important aspects of ethics in qualitative research are high degree of caution, accuracy and honesty in sensitive issues (Paul & Bandyopadhyay, 2018, p. 47). Therefore, the qualitative researcher should create a safe environment during the data collection process, should not harm the research environment, and should proceed with the activities as smoothly as possible. He/she should discuss the purpose of the research and how to use the data and should not deceive the participants in any way. In addition, a balance of power should be observed in interviews and observations with participants. Sharing personal impressions and revealing emotions should be avoided and leading questions should be avoided. Rewarding the participants for their participation and support should also be considered (Creswell, 2020, p. 61). While positivist research emphasizes the separation between the researcher and the researched, most interpretivist research emphasizes the interaction between the researcher and the researched. The distance between the participants and the researcher is not a feature that makes the research more ethical in terms of achieving standards (Glesne, 2015, p. 224). In qualitative researchers, unlike quantitative researchers, there is a gradually developing relationship between the participant and the researcher, based on the goal of examining and making sense of reality through the eyes of the participants in the environment where the event takes place (Berg, 2009, p. 16). Because naturalistic research takes the researcher into the real world in which people live and work, and in-depth interviews reveal what is inside people (Patton, 2018, p. 419). In qualitative research, the relationship between the researcher and participant plays a crucial role in shaping the kind of data and insights that emerge. This interaction isn't just a means to gather information—it's a dynamic and collaborative process where empathy, trust, and genuine engagement are essential. Researchers must be both emotionally attuned and intellectually independent, striking a delicate balance between connecting with participants and maintaining objectivity. As the dialogue deepens, a

sense of intimacy often develops, which can enrich the research but also introduces risks. This closeness may blur ethical boundaries, potentially compromising the autonomy of participants or influencing their honesty. That's why researchers must remain critically aware of the power dynamics and emotional subtleties involved—ensuring that their methods uphold integrity while respecting the dignity and vulnerability of those they study (Baarnhielm & Ekblad, 2002, s. 475). During interviews, participants may say things they never intended to say. With the promise of confidentiality given to participants, interviews can turn into a kind of confessional (Patton, 2018, p. 407). In this context, qualitative researchers need to work with participants to conduct rich research and obtain detailed information. It can be said that it should establish a sincere and friendly relationship, but it should also set the boundaries of this well. Patton (2018) stated that social scientists do not have the legal protections that lawyers and clergy have, and that it is obligatory to report information and evidence to the police on sensitive issues that constitute important crimes, such as child abuse.

Qualitative field research is certainly an activity that presents difficult situations and ethically appropriate courses of action are not always possible (Truscott, 2004, p. 811). Ethical issues in qualitative research are at the core of social research and this is particularly emphasized in fieldwork. Because the best way to deal with ethical issues is to think about and prepare for them (Murray, 1995). One of the most important tasks of qualitative researchers is to minimize the flaws in observation and to obtain accurate information. Therefore, researchers need to constantly update their research skills in terms of methodology (Sanjari et al. 2014, p. 5). In addition, there are ethical concerns about the capture and production of images for the purposes of the research. Some of these concerns relate to the data collection itself; for example, video recording or photography can distract participants from what they are interested in and can seriously harm the situation under investigation. This is because participants may have concerns that the recorded images may be used for malicious purposes (Hammersley & Traianou, 2017, p. 60). The qualitative researcher should be very sensitive at this point, reassure and reassure the participants that they will not be harmed in any way.

Ethical Considerations in Data Analysis

Analyzing data in qualitative research can raise ethical issues. Since the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection, the data are filtered through the researcher's biases and theoretical stance. Deciding what is important and what is not, determining what to follow or not to follow during data collection and analysis is almost entirely under the control of the researcher (Merriam, 2018, p. 264). Therefore, the attitude of the researcher in data analysis is of great ethical importance.

The qualitative researcher should be transparent enough to show that he/she does not fit the data to his/her own beliefs, expectations, and prejudices. In order to ensure this transparency, he/she should present both data collection and data analysis processes in detail and clearly reveal how he/she reached the results (Yaşar, 2018, p. 68). It should report not only positive results but all positive and negative results. In addition, it should respect the privacy of the participants in analyzing the data be heard, use pseudonyms for participants, and develop complex profiles, while at the same time avoiding bias among participants (Creswell, 2020, p. 57).

The process of making sense of the data collected in qualitative data analysis is critical for the reliability and validity of the research. In this context, qualitative data analysis software such as NVivo, MAXQDA, ATLAS.ti offer significant advantages to researchers in terms of systematic coding of data, revealing themes and managing data transparently. Such software allows researchers to bring together a large number of documents, audio recordings, videos and visual materials on a single platform. NVivo, for example, allows researchers to apply their code directly to text, create visual representations, and cross-analyze data (Jackson & Bazeley, 2019, p. 2). MAXQDA, on the other hand, offers an accessible analysis environment for both experienced and new researchers with its user-friendly interface and powerful visualization tools (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2019, p. 33). With this software, the coding process becomes more transparent because all analysis steps are recorded within the software and can be audited when necessary (Woolf & Silver, 2017).

Qualitative data analysis software also allows the reporting of quantitative outputs (e.g. code frequencies, common themes, emerging patterns) that support the researcher's subjective interpretations. This increases both the explainability of the research process and its acceptability by academic communities (Saldana, 2021). Code trees, thematic maps, and relationship diagrams created through software help to present research findings more effectively. They also play an important role in facilitating joint access and interpretation processes in team-based studies.

In conclusion, the use of qualitative data analysis software helps the researcher to approach the data systematically, manage the analysis process more transparently and increase the academic credibility of the research findings. Therefore, the use of such software is recommended as a strong methodological choice, especially in comprehensive qualitative research.

Ethical Considerations in the Reporting Process

Shils (1997) stated that the discovery and transmission of truth (knowledge) is the hallmark of the academic profession, just as the treatment of the patient is the hallmark of the medical profession (p. 3). Qualitative researchers emphasize not only the importance of understanding the theories and beliefs that inform their research, but also the importance of actively writing them down in their studies and reports (Creswell, 2020, p. 181). Researchers must ethically consider issues of participant and data confidentiality as they transcribe their work and begin to share it with a wider audience (Glesne, 2015, p. 249). A qualitative research report should reflect the decisions, practices, designs and data analysis processes taken during the research (Yaşar, 2018, p. 68). Qualitative studies tend to use methods that result in text production, not numerical outputs (Sanjari et al. 2014, p. 2). Therefore, maximum attention should be paid to the reporting process. The findings obtained in the reporting process should be reported honestly and should not be forged or fabricated in any way. References should be cited for quotations from the works of others, and plagiarism should be avoided. Information that would decipher the participant should be withheld, stories should be written with appropriate complexity so that they are not recognized, and the researcher should convey the research text to the reader using a clear and clear language (Creswell, 2020, p. 60). The researcher should be able to present what the data reveal in a way that is appropriate to the purpose of the research by using the full extent of his/her intellectual capacity and represent the data fairly (Yaşar, 2018, s. 69). In addition,

according to general ethical rules, before the research text reaches a wide audience, the participants of the research should be able to read the research text, observe it, discuss the content and form of the presentation, or experience the artistic dimension in some way (Glesne, 2015, p. 249).

Merriam (2018) draws attention to another point and states that ethical problems can also be observed in the process of communicating research findings to target audiences. Merriam stated that if a research to be conducted is supported by an institution, the research report may also be written for the supporting institution, so the researcher may lose control over the data collected and the use of the data for other purposes (p. 225).

Ethical Considerations in the Publishing Process

Ethical principles are part of the whole qualitative research project and researchers can ensure validity, reliability, rigor and quality in the study process. These principles are what protect the interests of the participants and can protect them from harm (Paul & Bandyopadhyay, 2018, p. 803). Therefore, in a qualitative study, ethical principles should always be at the forefront until the publication process and even after publication. The researcher should give a copy of the report to the relevant people and participants and share the practical results. They should not reuse the materials they have used for other research. The researcher should mention who will benefit from the research and the organization funding the research. If requested, they should be able to provide documentation that there are no conflicts of interest and ethical problems (Creswell, 2020, p. 60). It should not be forgotten that the ethically important thing(s) should be available to the researcher even after the research has been published and disseminated(Murray,1995).

Discussion and Conclusion

Ethical behaviors are principles that should guide everyone who conducts scientific research. Unethical behaviors are not only seen in quantitative research but are also frequently encountered in qualitative research processes. As partially mentioned in this study, the history of science is full of unethical behaviors and practices. Since qualitative research requires spending a long time in the field to collect rich and deep information and establishing close relationships with the participants, it can be said that both the types of unethical behaviors that may be encountered and the ethical dilemmas and risks that may be experienced are more likely to be experienced. It should not be forgotten that ethical behaviors are not only behaviors that the researcher should pay attention to during the data collection process. As discussed in the study, ethical principles are issues that the researcher should pay attention to at all stages of the study, starting from the process of determining the research design/research topic to the process of publishing the research, and it is a great responsibility for qualitative researchers to protect these principles. Even after the research is published, there are ethical issues -related to confidentiality, privacy, etc.- that a qualitative researcher must comply with and protect. The qualitative researcher should have an ethical framework to deal with all these ethical issues.

"Ethical codes are general and absolute" (Laine, 2000, p. 4), but it is also true that qualitative research inherently involves different ethical considerations. The challenges inherent in qualitative research can be addressed through awareness and the use of ethical principles, particularly autonomy, beneficence and justice can be mitigated (Orb,

Eisenhauer & Wynaden, 2000, p. 95). Since the main tool of qualitative research is human beings, researchers who intend to work with qualitative research method always have risks and possibilities such as including personal prejudices in the research process, being influenced by their own beliefs and values, making mistakes, and missing opportunities (Merriam, 2018, p. 16). For this reason, it is very valuable for both the researcher and the research for a qualitative researcher to critically evaluate and review their experiences and their own subjectivity during the research (Seggie & Bayyurt, 2017, p. 18). There is evidence that the current body of work on ethics in qualitative research has come a long way from the 1960s, when research was conducted at the expense of participants and audiences. Roth & Unger (2018, p. 4) noted that it is exciting to see that qualitative researchers tend to behave ethically not as a principle or law, but as a feature of the relationship between the researcher and the researched.

In the process of rapid digital transformation through science and technology, an ethical evaluation should be emphasized (Özcan, 2021, p. 91). The use of artificial intelligence in social sciences has also raised a number of ethical issues. The inclusion of this technology in research processes creates new question marks both in the methods of data collection and processing and in the reliability of research results. This ethical dilemma posed by artificial intelligence in social sciences is the potential of this technology to increase the risk of fraud and manipulation in scientific research. With artificial intelligence tools, it has become easier to generate text, create fake academic articles or manipulate data (Maral, 2024, p. 18- 19). In order to determine who is responsible for such risks, dangers, losses or damages caused by artificial intelligence, there is a need to determine the necessary criteria (Efe, 2021, p. 18). In addition, applications that can reveal such frauds should be developed and it should be made mandatory for researchers to undertake that they do not use such programs in their scientific studies.

Ethics in qualitative research is not limited to the permissions and approvals obtained before the research; it is a comprehensive area of responsibility that extends to all stages of the research. The researcher-participant relationship, which is at the core of the qualitative method, requires a more careful attitude in terms of ethics since the data are obtained directly from human experiences (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 263). The confidentiality of participants' identities, the protection of their privacy and the meaningful execution of informed consent processes are of particular importance in this method.

Ethical “dilemmas” encountered especially in qualitative research are too context-specific to be solved by fixed rules. In this context, the reflexivity of the researcher, i.e. constantly reviewing his/her own stance, biases and influences in the research process, forms the basis of ethical decisions (Berger, 2015, p. 230). Ethical reflexivity brings with it a perspective that questions whether it is possible to produce meaning without harming participants' narratives. In qualitative research, being aware of power relations also falls within the scope of ethical responsibility. The asymmetrical relationship between the researcher and the participant should be carefully considered, especially in studies with disadvantaged groups (Mertens, 2019, p.80). Therefore, ethics should be redefined not only to prevent harm but also to support the active participation of participants in the process.

Technological tools used in data analysis also contribute to ethical transparency. For example, qualitative analysis software such as NVivo or MAXQDA allows for systematic, traceable and reliable analysis of data (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013, p. 14). In this way, the

inferences made by the researcher during the analysis process become more open and auditable, which is important for ethical accountability.

This study revealed that ethical principles in qualitative research are not only a procedural obligation but also a dimension that affects the methodological and philosophical basis of the research. Ethical decision-making processes are directly related to the researcher's professional competence as well as personal sensitivity and contextual knowledge. Therefore, in planning and conducting qualitative research, ethical practices should not be seen only as a list of "to-dos".

Increasing ethics-oriented studies in the literature contribute to the redefinition of ethics in social sciences. In particular, the principles of reflexivity, participant-centeredness, sensitivity in data sharing and fairness in the interpretation of results make qualitative research more ethically responsible. The realization of such principles not only protects the participants but also increases the scientific validity of the research (Tracy, 2010, p. 848-849).

When a critical researcher gains a personal and professional perspective, he or she will somehow raise ethical questions in the public sphere (Soltis, 1989, p. 125). A researcher who puts ethical question(s) on his/her agenda has taken the right first step for his/her work. A researcher needs to have one critical personal characteristic in a research study throughout their entire career: bringing a strong sense of ethics to their research. Having such a sense is especially essential for qualitative researchers (Yin, 2011, p. 25).

Current and Technological Ethical Recommendations

While addressing ethical issues in qualitative research, the opportunities provided by technological developments both improve the quality of research processes and offer new solutions to researchers in the management of ethical risks. While traditional ethical approaches mostly focus on face-to-face interviews and physical data collection processes, digital tools have reshaped research methods. In this context, using technology in an ethically compatible manner is among the main responsibilities of researchers.

1. Data Protection and Encryption Software

Protecting participants' data is one of the most critical ethical responsibilities of qualitative research. Nowadays, advanced encryption software (e.g. VeraCrypt, BitLocker, NordLocker) can help protect sensitive data such as interview recordings and transcripts. With such tools, data can be securely stored both on the device and in the cloud (Ruivo et al., 2014, p. 20).

2. Anonymization Automations

Software such as NVivo, MAXQDA, and Atlas.ti can contribute to the anonymization process by automatically detecting identifying elements such as name, place, and institution in texts. These features allow the researcher to apply the principle of anonymity systematically and consistently (Woolf & Silver, 2017, p. 28).

3. Audio Consent Technologies

As an alternative to traditional written consent forms, it has become possible to obtain audio consent through mobile applications. Such digital methods strengthen ethical inclusion, especially in studies conducted with participants with low literacy levels (Nind

et al., 2013, p. 50).

4. Ethical Monitoring with Blockchain

Blockchain technology breaks new ground in ethical transparency to prevent data manipulation and keep time-stamped records of the analysis process. With this method, it becomes traceable which data was manipulated and when, which strengthens the ethical traceability of the research (Kotsiopoulos et al., 2020, s. 17).

5. Ethical Awareness Training with Virtual Reality (VR)

VR applications with ethical awareness scenarios developed for researchers can be used in pre-research training processes. Such applications enable experiential learning, especially on “interactive ethical dilemmas” (Schultze, 2014, s. 30).

6. Artificial Intelligence Supported Reflexivity Tools

Some newly developed software can analyze the diary or field notes written by the researcher and flag biased or contradictory statements. Such reflexivity-supported systems help the researcher to increase their awareness of their own position.

Değerlendirme	İki Dış Hakem / Çift Taraflı Körleme
Etik Beyan	<p>* Bu makale, 14. ASEAD Uluslararası Sosyal Bilimler Sempozyumu’nda sözlü olarak sunulan ancak tam metni yayımlanmayan “Nitel Araştırmalarda Etik” adlı tebliğin içeriği geliştirilerek ve kısmen değiştirilerek üretilmiş hâlidir.</p> <p>Bu çalışmanın hazırlanma sürecinde bilimsel ve etik ilkelere uyulduğu ve yararlanılan tüm çalışmaların kaynakçada belirtildiği beyan olunur.</p>
Benzerlik Taraması	Yapıldı – İthenticate
Etik Bildirim	itobiad@itobiad.com
Çıkar Çatışması	Çıkar çatışması beyan edilmemiştir.
Finansman	Bu araştırmayı desteklemek için dış fon kullanılmamıştır.
Peer-Review	Double anonymized - Two External
Ethical Statement	<p>* This article is the revised and developed version of the unpublished conference presentation entitled “Ethics in Qualitative Research”, orally delivered at the 14th ASEAD Social Sciences Symposium</p> <p>It is declared that scientific and ethical principles have been followed while carrying out and writing this study and that all the sources used have been properly cited.</p>
Plagiarism Checks	Yes - İthenticate
Conflicts of Interest	The author(s) has no conflict of interest to declare.
Complaints	itobiad@itobiad.com
Grant Support	The author(s) acknowledge that they received no external funding in support of this research.

References / Kaynakça

- Aluwihare, D. (2012). Ethics in Qualitative Research: A View of the Participant's and Researchers' World from a Critical Standpoint, *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 64-81. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940691201100208>
- Baarnhielm, S., & Ekblad, S. (2002). Qualitative research culture and ethics: A case discussion. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 39(4), 469-483. doi: [10.1177/1363461502039004493](https://doi.org/10.1177/1363461502039004493)
- Barnes, J. (1979). *Who Should Know What? Social Science, Privacy and Ethics*, Harmondsworth, Penguin.
- Bazeley, P., & Jackson, K. (2013). *Qualitative data analysis with NVivo* (2th ed.). SAGE. doi:[10.1080/14780887.2014.992750](https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2014.992750)
- Beauchamp, T. L., & Childress, J. F. (1989). *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*. New York: NY: Oxford University Press.
- Berg, B. L. (2009). *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (7th ed.). Boston: Allyn ve Bacon.
- Berger, R. (2015). Now I see it, now I don't: Researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research. *Qualitative research*, 15(2), 219-234. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794112468475>
- Bogdan, R. (2005). *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Methods* (5th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Creswell, J. W. (2020). *Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri Beş Yaklaşımına Göre Nitel Araştırma ve Araştırma Desenleri* (5th ed.). (M. Bütün, & S. Demir, Çev.) Ankara: Siyasal Kitabevi.
- Cooper, K. & White, R. E. (2012). *Qualitative Research in the Post-Modern Era. Contexts of Qualitative Research*. New York: Springer Science - Business Media B. V.
- David, B., & Resnik, J. D. (2011). *What is Ethics in Research & Why is it Important*. National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/research/resources/bioethics/whatis/index.cfm>.
- Denzin, N. (1992). Whose Cornerville is it Anyway? *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 21(1), 120-132. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891241692021001007>
- Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (2017). *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage.
- Efe, A. (2021). Yapay zeka risklerinin etik yönünden değerlendirilmesi. *Bilgi ve İletişim Teknolojileri Dergisi*, 3(1), 1-24.
- Finch, J. (1984). *It's Great to Have Someone to Talk to: The Ethics and Politics of Interviewing Women*. Roberts, H. and Bell, C. (ed.), *Social Researching: Politics, Problems, Practice*. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Glesne, C. (2015). *Nitel Araştırmaya Giriş* (5. Baskı). (A. Ersoy, & P. Yalçinoğlu, Çev.) Ankara: Anı Yayıncılık.
- Gliner, J., Morgan, G., & Leech, N. (2015). *Uygulamada Araştırma Yöntemleri Desen ve Analizi Bütünleştiren Yaklaşım* (2 Baskı). (S. Turan, Çev.) Ankara: Nobel Akademi.
- Guillemin, M., & Gillam, L. (2004). Ethics, reflexivity, and "ethically important

moments" in research. *Qualitative inquiry*, 10(2), 261-280.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800403262360>

Hammersley, M. & Traianou, A. (2017). *Nitel Araştırmalarda Etik*. (S. Balcı & B. Ahi, Çev.) Ankara: Anı Yayıncılık.

Humphreys, L. (1970). *Tearoom Trade: Impersonal Sex in Public Places*. New York: Aldine Publishing Company.

Jackson, K., & Bazeley, P. (2019). *Qualitative data analysis with NVivo*.

Kotsiopoulos, I., Kotsopoulos, D., & Tsihrintzis, G. A. (2020). Blockchain technology in qualitative research: Enhancing data security and integrity. *Information*, 11(12), 563.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/info11120563>

Kuckartz, U., & Rädiker, S. (2019). Coding video data, audio data, and images. In *Analyzing Qualitative Data with MAXQDA: Text, Audio, and Video* (pp. 83-91). Cham: Springer International Publishing. doi:[10.1007/978-3-030-15671-8](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-15671-8)

Laine, M. (2000). *Fieldwork, Participation and Practice. Ethics and Dilemmas in Qualitative Research*. London: SAGE Publications.

Lincoln, Y. S. (1998). The Ethics of Teaching in Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 4(3), 315-327. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/107780049800400301>

Maral, T. (2024). Sosyal bilimlerin kesişim noktası: Yapay zeka ve etik. *Ankara Uluslararası Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, (Yapay Zeka ve Sosyal Bilimler Öğretimi)*, 17-33.

Mauthner, M., Birch, M., Jessop, J. & Miller, T. (2002). *Ethics in Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publications.

Merriam, S. (2018). *Nitel Araştırma Desen ve Uygulama İçin Bir Rehber*. (S. Turan, Çev.) Ankara: Nobel Akademi.

Mertens, D. M. (2019). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods*. Sage publications.

Murray, L. W. (1995). Knowledge, Power and Ethics in Qualitative Social Research. *The American Sociologist*, 26(2), 22-34.

Nespor, J. & Groenke, S. L. (2009). Ethics, Problem Framing and Training in Qualitative Inquiry. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 15(2), 996-1012. doi: [10.1177/1077800409334188](https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800409334188)

Nicolaus, M. (1968). *Fat-cat Sociology: Remarks at the American Sociological Association Convention*. Hyperlink "http://www.colorado.edu/sociology/gimenez/fatcat.html" www.colorado.edu/sociology/gimenez/fatcat.html (10.05.20).

Nind, M., Wiles, R., Bengry-Howell, A., & Crow, G. (2013). Methodological innovation and research ethics: forces in tension or forces in harmony?. *Qualitative Research*, 13(6), 650-667. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794112455042>

Orb, A., Eisenhauer, L., & Wynaden, D. (2000). Ethics in Qualitative Research. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 33(1), 93-96. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1547-5069.2001.00093.x>

Özcan, N. (2021). Dijital etik üzerine nitel bir araştırma. *Gençlik Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 9(25), 89-108. <https://doi.org/10.52528/genclikarastirmalari.1004342>

- Patton, M. Q. (2018). *Nitel Araştırma ve Değerlendirme Yöntemleri* (3. Baskı). (S. B. Demir, Çev.) Ankara: Pegem Akademi Yayınları.
- Paul, U. K. & Bandyopadhyay, A. (2018). Qualitative Research: Ethical Issues. *Bengal Physician Journal*, 5(3), 45-47. doi: [10.5005/jp-journals-10070-5215](https://doi.org/10.5005/jp-journals-10070-5215)
- Ramcharan, P. & Cutcliffe, J. R. (2001). Judging the Ethics of Qualitative Research: Considering the 'Ethics as Process' Model. *Health & Social Care in the Community*, 9(6), 358-366. doi: [10.1046/j.1365-2524.2001.00323.x](https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-2524.2001.00323.x)
- Roshaidi, S. (2018). Ethical Considerations in Qualitative Study. *International Journal of Care Scholars*, 1(2), 29-33. doi: <https://doi.org/10.31436/ijcs.v1i2.82>
- Roth, W. F. & Unger, H. V. (2018). Current Perspectives on Research Ethics in Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Social Research*, 19(3), doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17169/fgs-19.3.3155>
- Ruivo, P., Santos, V., & Oliveira, T. (2014). Data protection in services and support roles—a qualitative research amongst ICT professionals. *Procedia Technology*, 16, 710-717. doi: [10.1016/j.protcy.2014.10.020](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.protcy.2014.10.020)
- Saldaña, J. (2021). The coding manual for qualitative researchers.
- Sanjari, M., Bahramnezhad, F., Fomani, F. K., Shoghi, M. & Cheraghi, M. A. (2014). Ethical Challenges of Researchers in Qualitative Studies: The Necessity to Develop a Specific Guideline. *Journal of Medical Ethics and History of Medicine*, 7(14), 1-6.
- Schultze, U. (2014). Performing embodied ethics during fieldwork: Studying ICT and body politics. *Journal of Information Technology*, 29(4), 310–325. doi: [10.1057/ejis.2012.52](https://doi.org/10.1057/ejis.2012.52)
- Seggie, F. N., & Bayyurt, Y. (2017). *Nitel Araştırma Yöntem, Teknik, Analiz ve Yaklaşımları* (2. Baskı). Ankara: Anı Yayıncılık.
- Shils, E. (1997). *The Academic Ethic. The Calling of Education*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Soltis, J. F. (1989). The Ethics of Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 2(2), 123-130. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0951839890020203>
- Tracy, S. J. (2010). Qualitative quality: Eight “big-tent” criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative inquiry*, 16(10), 837-851. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800410383121>
- Truscott D. (2004). *Fieldwork, Participation and Practice: Ethics and Dilemmas in Qualitative Research*, 811-813. doi: [10.1002/sce.20029](https://doi.org/10.1002/sce.20029)
- TÜBA, (2002). *Bilimsel Araştırmada Etik ve Sorunları*. Ankara: Türkiye Bilimler Akademisi Yayınları.
- Wiles, R. (2013). *What are Qualitative Research Ethics?*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Woolf, N. H., & Silver, C. (2017). *Qualitative analysis using NVivo: The five-level QDA® method*. Routledge.
- Yaşar, M. (2018). Nitel Araştırmalarda Nitelik Sorunu. *MSKU Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 5(2), 55-73. doi: <https://doi.org/10.21666/muefd.426318>
- Yin, R. K. (2011). *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish*. New York: Guilford Press.