



## TRACING THE FOUR-DECADE JOURNEY OF RESEARCH IN ETHICS AND HIGHER EDUCATION- A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS

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*Higher education institutions have a significant role in fostering ethical behaviour in students. Ethics in higher education encompasses a wide range of areas, including academic integrity, research ethics, ethical leadership, social responsibility, inclusivity, and sustainable education. The study of research on ethics in higher education shows that considerable work has been done on theory, models, analysis, processes, compliance, etc., in this domain. A look at literature over the past four decades maps how the literature has progressed over the years. In the current study, the researchers have used bibliometric analysis to trace the four-decade journey of research done in ethics in higher education. This research analysed 346 papers published in Scopus-indexed peer-reviewed journals between 1981 to 2023. The bibliometric analysis helped to yield interesting insights into understanding the most referenced articles, journals, countries, institutions, and authors in the ethics and higher education literature. The study also aims at understanding the new research themes in ethics and higher education. Drawing on the result of cluster analysis, the keywords help in defining four broad research themes.*

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**KEYWORDS:** Ethics and Higher Education, Higher Education Institutions, Bibliometric Analysis

## INTRODUCTION

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) play a vital role in the growth and prosperity of any nation. They are at the core of today's knowledge-intensive society, where data is considered the "new fuel" for any economy. They are considered "knowledge-intensive organizations" (Ramachandran et al., 2013) or "knowledge-creating institutions" (Rowley, 2000) by past researchers and are engaged in creating, disseminating, promoting, and transferring knowledge. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are active in teaching, research, and scholarship and are vital in promoting lifelong learning. The capacity to develop skills, enhance knowledge, provide learning opportunities, and the potential to mobilize educational resources make HEIs unique.

In higher educational institutions, professional ethics is of utmost importance as it aids in achieving the desired goals and objectives (Riabova et al., 2023). Academic honesty and intellectual integrity are the pillars of the educational process. A study by Scott (2006) highlighted the apparent culture of disinterest concerning ethical issues in higher education. According to Tripathi et al. (2019), many institutions and organizations have a code of ethics for their researchers; however, ethics and their understanding are mainly subjective and vary enormously from person to person. Higher educational institutions play an important role in shaping the future of their learners, it is here that the learners imbibe culture and values that stay with them lifelong. Ethics is a core value that is important in higher education institutions.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

A study of research through articles identified in the Scopus Database on ethics in higher education shows that considerable work has been done on theory, models, analysis, processes, compliance, etc., in this domain (Klaasen, 2020; Parsell et al., 2014; Rahimjanovna, 2020). The article by Klaasen (2020) focused on providing a comprehensive approach to ethics in higher education. Rahimjanovna (2020) focused on systematically reviewing processes and compliance aspects of ethics in higher education. The outcome and effect of ethics were discussed at length by Parsell et al. (2014). The studies were significant as they highlighted the need for and importance of structures, processes and policies to maintain high standards of ethics in higher education. The number of articles, chapters, and other forms of research work has been on an increasing trend

in recent years. A look at literature over the past four decades maps how the literature has progressed over the years. Hence, it is evident that ethics in higher education is an essential domain of research. However, there is a need to provide a more holistic overview of the kind of work that researchers across the globe have carried out in this domain. Bibliometric analysis is a popular method that helps to trace how literature has evolved over the last four decades (Merigó & Yang, 2017). The bibliometric analysis provides an understanding of citation and co-citation analysis that helps recognize emerging trends in a particular area of research. These emerging trends serve as a base for researchers to contribute to in the future. In this study, the researchers have used bibliometric analysis to address the subsequent research questions:

RQ1: What are the most referenced articles in the ethics and higher education literature?

RQ2: Which journals, countries, institutions, and authors have contributed extensively to this area of research?

RQ3: What are the new research themes in ethics and higher education?

The objectives of the study focus on these three research questions. To find the answers to these three research questions, the researchers have studied articles published in ethics and higher education from the Scopus database for the last four decades, i.e., from 1981 to May 2023.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Higher education institutions are critical in shaping a country's future. The ideals and ethics instilled in such institutions serve as life lessons for students that are carried on. As a result, it is critical to conduct research and educate institutions on ethical practices. The scope of ethics in higher education is quite vast it includes roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders, practices and policies adopted, academic leadership, and classroom and learner ethics. Ethics has been given attention recently due to the growing issues in teaching and learning in higher education (Malcolm & Zukas, 2009). However, in the face of ethical challenges in the current higher education landscape, discussion on quality, ethics, and moral values is rare (Prisacariu & Shah, 2016). Furthermore, many educational researchers have experienced ethical approval challenges. For ethical practices in higher education, administrators, academic leadership, and faculty should be thoroughly involved (Rautela et al., 2022). Some statutory committees provide guidelines for ethical practices to be followed in higher educational institutions. Responsible leadership is crucial to maintain governance and create an environment that promotes ethical practices. Ethical leadership is crucial for ensuring ethical practices in higher education. An ethical leader will ensure that ethics is practised across all verticals

that would range from administration, research, and teaching activities in the institute. This further adds to the United Nations Sustainable Goals of excellent education.

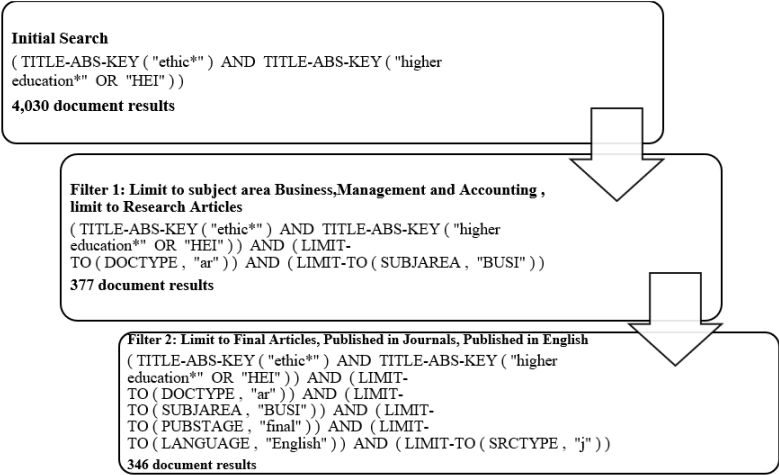
Faculty have a crucial role to play in ethics in higher education. Students look up to a faculty and reciprocate in a manner that the faculty behaves. Hence faculty need to conduct themselves ethically. This could include fair assessment, punctuality, sincerity toward class delivery, and fair, equitable treatment of students (Aldazabal et al., 2017). Their efforts should be towards orientation, teaching and engaging learners with practices that encourage academic integrity (Chowdhury, 2018; Peters & Romero, 2019). Faculty help in modelling the behaviours of learners. Learners who have a positive relationship with their faculty are less likely to engage in dishonest practices and have a positive commitment towards the class and the faculty which prompts ethical behaviour (Stoesz & Yuditseva, 2018). Higher educational institutions are vital for moulding students, and ethics are crucial to imbibing correct values in students. Ethics in higher education is a collaborative effort of multiple stakeholders that could represent statutory requirements, conscious practices, codes of conduct, etc. All stakeholders must recognize the importance of ethics in higher education.

## DATA COLLECTION

The researchers have referred to the Scopus database to study published research articles that discuss ethics and higher educational institutions. Scopus is a trusted database that has well-defined policies and guidelines for publication. Scopus as a database also has comprehensive coverage and representation of work globally. The various operating functions of the Scopus database, namely author details, journal details, country, university, and funding details, help in bibliometric analysis.

Figure 1 represents the steps followed in the data collection process. The basis of the bibliometric analysis is keyword identification. Putting in the correct search words was crucial to yield accurate results. To get a better understanding of the exact keywords to be used, the researcher initially did a literature review to identify words that researchers in this domain commonly used. This helped in identifying synonymous words. A brainstorming session was conducted before finalizing the keywords. The keywords were finalized as "ethic\*" AND "higher education\*" OR "HEI." The Boolean asterisk was crucial and is a wild card operator that helped cover a wide range of words such as ethics, ethical, ethical, etc. This search helped to provide 4030 results.

Researchers then applied two levels of filtration to the search results. The researchers were interested in looking at work published in research articles;



**Figure 1. Data Collection Process.**

no filtration was applied to the number of years. The research attempted to cover articles from 1981 to 2023, i.e., spread over almost four decades. The subject area of Business, Management, and Accounting was selected for the analysis. Ethics and governance are crucial aspects of management and business. In higher education institutions, the enrolment of students in programs offering courses in management is very high. This filter provided 377 documents. In the final filter, the researchers limited their search to include only final articles published in journals and published in English. Three hundred forty-six articles were the final counts that were considered for bibliometric analysis.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

According to Wolfram (2003), bibliometric analysis is related to the broad term informetric, which is a study of the different quantitative aspects of information. The method is quite popular amongst researchers as it helps to understand the nature and dynamics of a field of research (Mejia et al., 2021). Two critical aspects of bibliometric analysis are citation and co-citation analysis. Citation analysis is based on the value scholars place on a publication when citing it as a source. Citation analysis uses descriptive indicators such as language, authors, institutions, countries, etc., that help researchers identify influential contributors to research. Co-citation analysis helps in understanding the

web or network of publications. Various forms of co-citation analysis, such as co-occurrence of author keywords, co-authorship analysis country-wise, and co-cited authors, help to understand the different clusters that have emerged due to work done by different researchers across the globe (Su & Lee, 2010).

A crucial part of this study was to get thorough insights into the research publications in ethics and higher education from 1981 to 2023. The first traces of ethics and higher education studies in the Scopus database occurred in 1981. The researchers segregated the research methodology into three crucial stages in the current study. In the first stage, data was collected from the Scopus database. The search results were then studied to generate citation analysis results, forming the second part of the research methodology. In the third step, co-citation analysis was performed using VOSViewer. The co-citation analysis helped identify emerging clusters that provide a framework for further research in ethics and higher education.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

A key objective of the study was to understand the four-decade journey of inquiry in ethics and higher education. The results section helps to understand this by looking at the Citation and Co-citation analyses.

Overview

Table 1  
Overview of Research Articles Published in Ethics And Higher Education.

Total Number of Papers	346
Institute/ university ( Affiliation of papers)	160
Journals (where papers were published)	159
Countries	80
Period (1981-5 <sup>th</sup> May 2023)	40+ years

Table 1 provides an overview of the search results. 346 research papers were used for bibliometric analysis. The table shows that 160 institutions have made vital contributions to this field of research through 159 different journals. Another exciting aspect is that researchers from 80 countries have participated in research in ethics and higher education.

Citation Analysis

The number of publications per year

Tracking the journey of research over four decades, i.e., from 1981 to 05<sup>th</sup> May 2023, shows that 346 papers were published in Journals in English. A look at Figure 2 and Table 2 shows that there were no papers published between 1982 to 1985. There was a prolonged start in the research contributions from 1981 to 2004. The area started gaining momentum through the increased interest of researchers after 2005. The highest number of publications were published in the year 2019 and 2021.

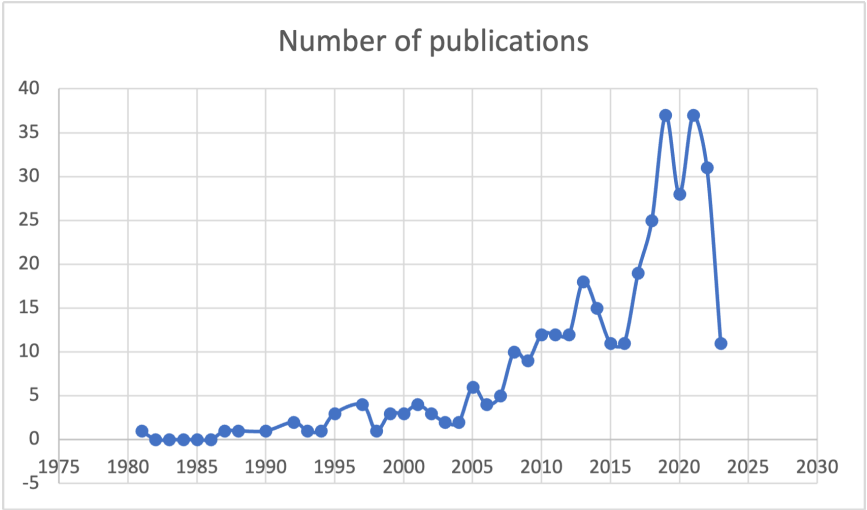


Figure 2. Graph of Year Wise Publications.

Table 2

Year Wise Number of Articles Published.

Year	Number of Articles Published
2023	11
2022	31
2021	38
2020	28
2019	37
2018	25

Continued on next page

Table 2 continued

2017	19
2016	11
2015	11
2014	15
2013	18
2012	12
2011	12
2010	12
2009	9
2008	10
2007	5
2006	4
2005	6
1981-2004	32
<b>Total</b>	<b>346</b>

**Most influential Countries**

Table 3 represents the country-wise publications indexed in Scopus. As depicted, the United States of America has the highest number of publications in the defined period, followed by the United Kingdom. The difference between the first and second countries is more than double the number. The research contribution in this area is dominated by the USA, followed by the U.K., Australia, Spain, South Africa, and India. It is good to see that developing countries have also started contributing to this area of research though there is a need for more contributions from developing countries.

Table 3

**Country Wise Publications.**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Number of Articles</b>
United States	108
United Kingdom	49
Australia	26
Spain	26
South Africa	17
India	15
Portugal	10
China	9

*Continued on next page*



*Table 3 continued*

Finland	9
Italy	9
Malaysia	9
Germany	8
Brazil	7
Netherlands	7
New Zealand	7
Canada	6

**Most Influential Institutions**

Table 4 shows the maximum number of articles affiliated with the University of Johannesburg. Among the top universities were seven universities/institutes from the USA, three universities/institutes from Australia, and two each from the United Kingdom, Spain, and South Africa. Other universities/institutes were from Portugal, Malaysia, and Estonia. There were 160 institutes/ universities, and 67 institutes/ universities had only one article.

**Table 4**

**Institution-Wise Publications.**

Name of Institute	Number of Articles
University of Johannesburg	7
Saint Joseph’s University, United States	4
Middle Tennessee State University, USA	4
Brunel University London	4
University of Colorado Boulder, USA	3
University of South Africa	3
Universiti Utara Malaysia	3
La Trobe University, Australia	3
Baylor University, USA	3
Middlesex University, U.K.	3
Monash University, Australia	3
Kennesaw State University, USA	3
University of Maryland, College Park, USA	3
Appalachian State University, USA	3
Universidade do Minho, Portugal	3

**Most Influential Journal By Number Of Articles**

Table 5 showcases the most influential journals that have published the maximum number of research articles on ethics and higher education. Journal of Business Ethics had 38 articles published in the defined area, the maximum number of articles published by any journal. Hence the journal has been identified as the most influential journal in this domain. This was followed by the Science and Engineering Ethics Journal (22) and the International Journal Of Educational Management (15). In total, 159 Journals have published papers related to the area. Out of 159 Journals, 107 Journals have just published one paper each on the area.

**Table 5**  
**Journal-Wise Publications.**

Name of Journal	Number of Articles Published
Journal of Business Ethics	38
Science and Engineering Ethics	22
International Journal of Educational Management	15
International Journal of Management Education	8
Journal of Cleaner Production	8
Futures	5
Journal of International Education In Business	5
Education and Training	4
Gender Work and Organization	4
Meditari Accountancy Research	4
Social Responsibility Journal	4
Tertiary Education and Management	4
Administrative Sciences	3
Frontiers of Business Research in China	3
Humanistic Management Journal	3
International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	3
International Journal of Management in Education	3

Most Influential Paper By Citations

Table 6 represents the most influential paper by citations, i.e., the papers with the maximum citations. A paper titled "Moral Reasoning and Business Ethics: Implications for Research, education and, Management," published in 1992, has been cited the maximum number of times, 328. This was followed by a paper published in 2005 titled "Entrepreneurship Education Research Revisited: The Case of Higher Education." There were 50 articles in the database which needed a citation.

Table 6  
Most Influential Paper By Citations.

Year	Document Title	Number of Citations
1992	Moral Reasoning and business ethics: Implications for Research, education, and Management	328
2005	Entrepreneurship education research revisited: The case of higher education	280
2015	New design challenges to widely implement 'Sustainable Product-Service Systems	229
2010	Universities and enterprise education: Responding to the Challenges of the new era	175
2007	Cheating during the college years: How do business school students compare?	134
2018	Trans-disciplinarity in higher education for sustainability: How discourses are approached in engineering education	111
2006	The creation of 'best practice' software: Myth, reality, and ethics	111
2016	Student privacy in learning analytics: An information ethics perspective	102
2004	Dangerous work: The gendered nature of bullying in the context of higher education	99

Continued on next page

Table 6 continued

2016	The effects of service quality on student loyalty: the mediating role of student satisfaction	78
2000	An experimental investigation of Efforts to improve sales students' Moral Reasoning	76
2014	Can accreditation help a leopard change its spots?: Social Accountability and stakeholder engagement in business schools	70
2012	Marketization of Education: An Ethical Dilemma	67
2019	Education for Advancing the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals: A systematic approach	60
2009	Appointing senior managers in education: Homo-sociability, local logic, and authenticity in the selection process	59
2011	Corporate social responsibility in management education: Current Status in Spanish universities	57

Co-Citation Analysis

Co-occurrence of Author Keywords

Co-occurrence of author keywords is a content analysis technique that constructs semantic visual maps using the author keywords. The authors used VoS viewer software to construct this map. The nodes in Figure 3 epitomize the keywords. The size of the nodes is related to the number of times the keyword appears in the documents. The links designate the relationships between a pair of nodes, and the strength of this relationship is observed in the width of the link. The strength of the link between the keywords combined with the final pattern with different clusters provides meaningful insights into past research and emerging research. The keywords analysis helps identify the most popular topics covered by bibliometric analysis. Further, for analysis, we clubbed the exact sounding and exact meaning words together and set the minimum occurrence of keywords to 5. Out of 1148 keywords, 21 keywords met this threshold value. Overall, we had 21 keywords divided into 6 clusters.

The most frequently occurring authors’ keywords signal scholars’ research priorities and interests in the field of ethics and higher education. The top five in terms of total occurrences were Higher education with 125 occurrences, Ethics with 59 occurrences, Business ethics with 30 occurrences, sustainability with 16 occurrences, and leadership with 13 occurrences.

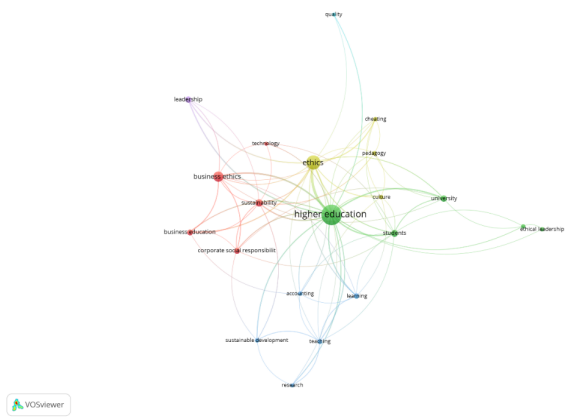


Figure 3. Co-occurrence of Author Keywords.

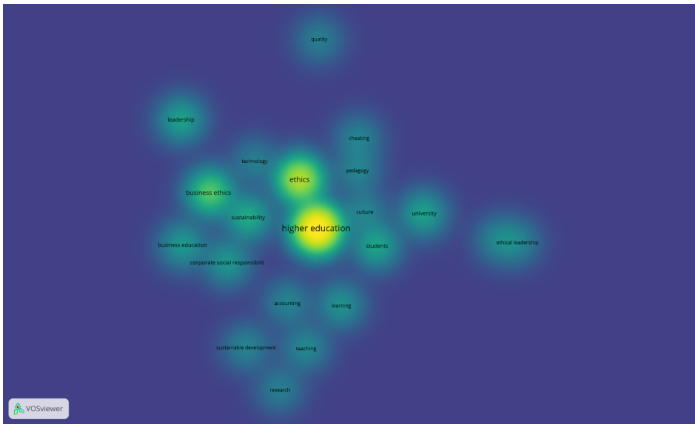


Figure 4. Density Visualization of Author Keywords.

A look at the clusters from Figures 3 and 4 also helps understand past research and future patterns.

Cluster 1 has five nodes and shows the close relationship between the keywords business education, business ethics, corporate social responsibility, sus-

tainability, and technology. Cluster 2 emphasizes the relationship between ethical leadership, higher education, job satisfaction, students, and university. The central theme of Cluster 3 was teaching, learning, accounting, and research, and the studies of Cluster 4 were focused on ethics, culture, cheating, and pedagogy.

### **The Emerging Trends In Research**

Drawing on the results of cluster analysis, the keywords help in defining four broad research themes. Keywords play an essential role in helping to uncover, understand and further develop the research areas. The four broad research themes are:

#### **Cluster 1: Ethics as Part of Business Education**

Ethics has been identified as an essential aspect of business education by studies in this cluster. Business schools face increased global scrutiny due to their role in educating future business professionals to act responsibly in the contemporary environment. Business schools face challenges brought on by contemporary business practices and environmental changes. Different researchers have proposed different models to educate and groom future business leaders in a manner that they understand their commitment to society. The Principles of Responsible Management Education is one such initiative supported by U.N. Global with the mission to inspire and champion responsible management education research and thought leadership globally.

Mousa et al. (2019) in their research discussed functional, procedural, and academic barriers to achieving high standards of ethics in higher education. [Lozano \(2022\)](#) discusses a framework based on educating competent, conscious, compassionate, and committed people and emphasizes professional, ethical-social, humanist, and spiritual dimensions. Multiple and customized instructional modalities, as per the instructor's style, curriculum, pathway, etc., were one recommendation for Business schools. There was commonality in most research papers when they emphasized the importance of grooming managers who build humane, ethical, and eco-friendly organizations ([Clegg et al., 2013](#); [Koris et al., 2017](#)). The difference lies in the implementation strategies recommended. Smithian value ethics was recommended for an effective accounting ethics education intervention for students, and similarly, developing an environment where faculty misconduct is considered socially inappropriate was another recommendation ([Elliot et al., 2013](#)). The introduction of a course on Business ethics and Corporate social responsibility along with systems thinking was effective in generating ethical sensitivity among students ([Culver et al., 2013](#); [Deets et al., 2020](#); [Godos-Dúez et al., 2015](#);

Taylor, 2013). Business schools that implemented and included sustainability practices, which also have an ethical component, had better positioning and competitive advantage (Bagur-Femenias et al., 2023). Overall, the first cluster highlights the importance of an ethical foundation that integrates all stakeholders and academic processes so that business schools can address the challenges and contribute and reshape management education that helps create a better society.

## **Cluster 2: Effect of Ethical Leadership on Higher Education**

Strong leadership can instil in the team a sense of commitment, honesty, and ethics and help focus the talent and energy of all stakeholders toward a common goal. Cluster 2 explores the role of ethical leadership in higher education. Ethical leadership was found to significantly affect all stakeholders in building a team of high productivity, commitment, and ethics. A study by Borde et al. (2022) found that ethical leadership in higher education institutes contributes to the United Nations Sustainable Goals of quality education. Ethical leadership positively impacts Organisational citizenship behaviour and harms social loafing. Ethical leadership was also an important predictor of an ethical climate and a value-based approach to building education communities (Dinc, 2018; Hyusein & Eyupoglu, 2022). Positive perception by students and faculty about ethical leadership and Corporate social responsibility played an important role in building an atmosphere of trust and a sense of belonging among faculty and effective acquisition of business ethics competencies by students (Chan & Hasan, 2019; Khasawneh, 2014). Co-curricular activities were some of the pedagogical tools that positively impacted students' ethical development. Hence, presentations, discussions, design projects, and working with a community significantly contributed to students' ethical development (Bielefeldt et al., 2020). The ethical leadership measurement scale strongly correlated with job satisfaction, ethical leadership, affective commitment, trust in the leader, and organizational citizenship behaviour (Zheng et al., 2011). Overall the second cluster brings into focus the emerging role of leadership in creating a positive, productive, and ethical culture in higher education.

## **Cluster 3: Teaching, learning, and Sustainability**

Teaching-learning is a crucial component of higher education. A well-designed teaching-learning process helps the faculty and students reach pre-determined goals. While it allows the teachers to make their teaching more effective, it helps the learners systematically gain knowledge. The curriculum is also a vital part of the teaching-learning process. The research in this cluster presents the challenges and possible solutions to improve the

teaching-learning process. Filho et al. (2022) proposed a better integration of sustainability, spirituality, and ethics and the involvement of key stakeholders for an improved teaching-learning process. The pandemic created significant changes in the teaching-learning process. Lack of professional, ethical knowledge of teachers in the use of technology has been raised as an area of concern (Trigueros, 2023). A more multi-disciplinary knowledge approach and more collaborations between universities/corporations were proposed to introduce new courses for integrated sustainability in higher education (Carey et al., 2021; Dean et al., 2020; Menkhoff et al., 2022; Obrador, 2020). The critical role of technology, stakeholders' involvement, and opportunities to create and cultivate interactive, creative teaching-learning communities were some of the proposed methods to transform the teaching-learning process (David & Hill, 2021). Similarly, integrating collaborative components was proposed for online teaching to inculcate ethical knowledge and ethical practice (Barak & Green, 2020; Shanks et al., 2021). Cluster 3 is dominated by teaching-learning processes that can help strengthen a sustainable education system so that students, schools, and communities work towards sustainability and ethics at a personal, local, national, and global level.

#### **Cluster 4: Unethical behaviour-challenges and solutions**

Cluster 4 brings concerns, anxiety, and an increasing prevalence of cheating and unethical means in higher education. Cheating actions were viewed as less unethical by highly entitled students than by less entitled ones. Rationalization of actions played a part in justifying unethical behaviour by students. Thus, if students believed their peers had an unfair advantage, they could justify unethical behaviour (Eliaz, 2017; Winrow, 2016). Students from a collectivist culture were more tolerant of unilateral, collaborative, and delaying behaviour. However, a positive attitude towards teamwork mediated the same. While challenges of unethical behaviour are a concern, researchers have attempted to provide solutions. A broader multicultural perspective and a focus on managing diversity by higher education institutes have the potential to prepare and equip students to address ethical concerns. Care ethics and a good crisis management team were found to help navigate ethical issues (Liu et al., 2022; Schultz, 2022). Refocusing on human capability rather than the human capital approach was suggested to help modern higher education. The fourth cluster provides a bird's eye view of the challenges of unethical practices, its links to culture, and the role of higher education institutes in bringing about change.



Country-wise Co-Authorship Analysis

Collaboration is an essential aspect of contemporary academic research. Researchers in an interconnected world also look towards networks to find solutions to social, political, economic, and business problems. Collaboration with other researchers helps to share ideas and resources, discuss and generate new knowledge, is productive, and gives a more comprehensive view of the problem and solution.

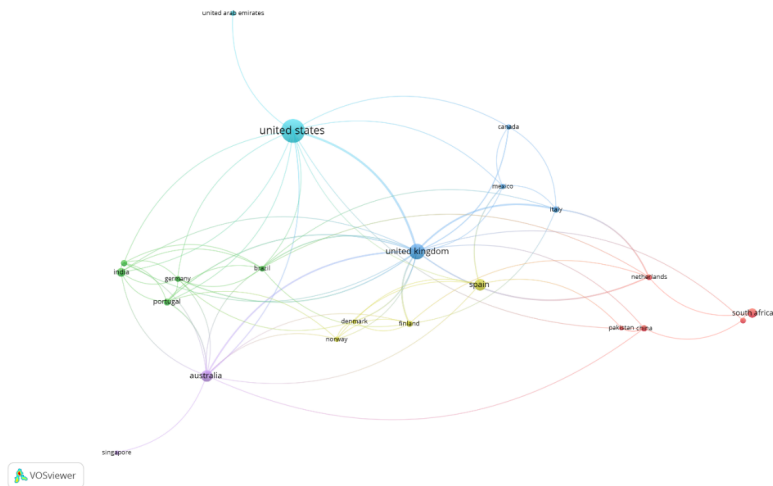


Figure 5. Country-Wise Co-Authorship Analysis.

For generating the map using VOS software, the minimum number of country documents was set at 5. As shown in Figure 5, out of 80 countries in the study, 22 met the threshold of 10 documents per country. This is a good number for analysis and further interpretations. The map generated 6 clusters with 69 links and a total link strength of 99. The United States of America had the maximum number of documents at 107, 12 links, and a link strength of 20. The United Kingdom had 49 documents, 16 links, and a link strength of 40. United Kingdom had the highest link strength of 40, which shows co-authorship solid links of researchers from the U.K. with other researchers. Australia had 26 documents, with 12 links and 17 link strengths. China, New Zealand, Pakistan, South Africa, and the Netherlands were part of Cluster 1. Germany, Brazil, Malaysia, India, and Portugal showed a close working relationship in Cluster 2. Denmark, Norway, Finland, and Spain formed the fourth cluster. Cluster 3 had Mexico, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Italy. Cluster 5 and Cluster 6 had two countries each. Cluster 5 had Australia and Singapore, and Cluster 6

had the USA and UAE.

Author Co-citation Analysis

Author co-citation analysis is used to visualize the strength of the research area of an academic discipline. It helps to quantify the relationship between co-cited authors. For our study, we kept an author’s minimum citation to 20. Out of 22242 authors, 30 met this criterion. This resulted in 6 clusters (shown in Figures 6 and 7) with 30 authors, 221 links, and 2637 link strength. Cluster 2 was the densest and had nine authors. Cluster 3 was next in density and had four authors.

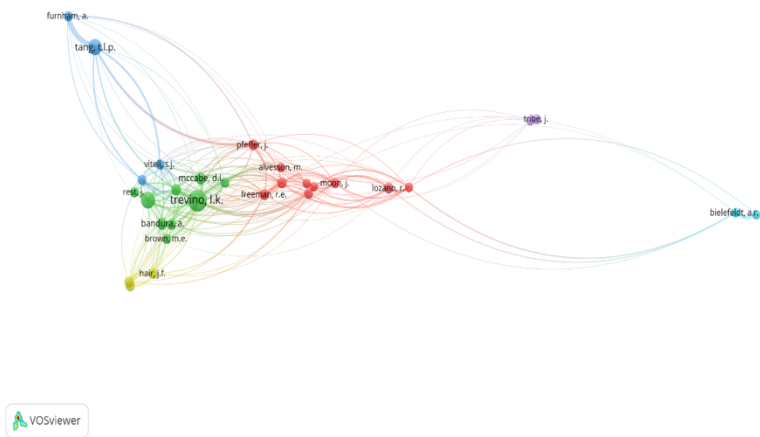
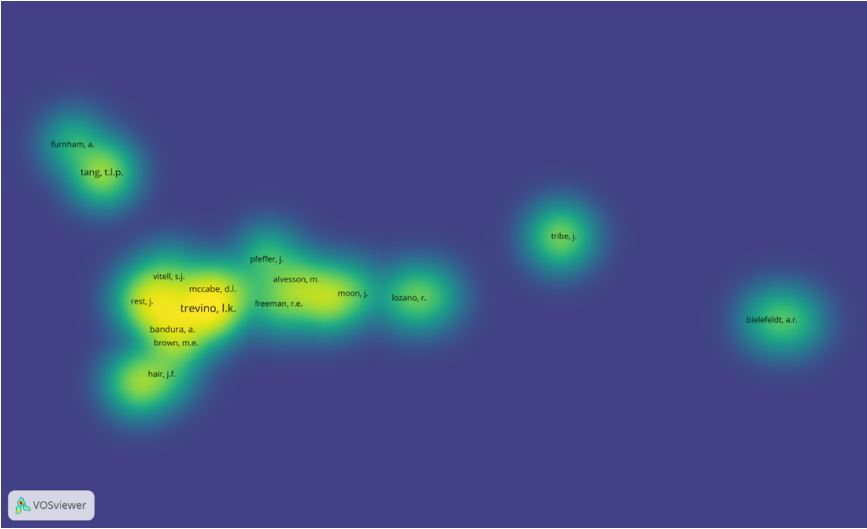


Figure 6. Network of Co-Cited Authors.

The red-coloured cluster emphasizes co-authorship related to institutional and formal structures for ethical practices in higher education. The green cluster represents leadership and behavioural ethics practices. The blue cluster broadly has a network that discusses sustainable practices and the role of students in ethics in higher education. The purple, light blue and yellow are smaller clusters that have co-authorship in the role of faculty and community in ethics in higher educational institutions. Further, the green and blue clusters have authors with the maximum citations, and their network has the highest link strengths and appears to be closely clustered; this also shows that leadership, behavioural ethics, and sustainable practices are closely interrelated.



**Figure 7. Density Visualization of Co-Cited Authors.**

Trevino L.K(104), Kohlberg (59), and Tang T.L.P (54) have high citations, which indicate that their work is significant and is often used as the base for other researchers working in this domain.

“Moral Reasoning and Business Ethics: Implications for Research, education, and Management” by Trevino (1992) discussed moral Reasoning that impacts a manager’s reason about ethical dilemmas and how that impacts behaviour. It looks at the institution setting and power distribution that influences ethical behaviour. Kohlberg’s (1984) “Essays on Moral Development” also closely developed a theory on moral Reasoning and ethical dilemmas. Both these papers are used as a basis for research in behavioural ethics. Tang (1993), in “The Meaning of Money: Extension and Exploration of the Money Ethic Scale in a Sample of University Students in Taiwan,” studied how ethics among students was closely related to a feeling of respect in society.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Professional ethics is paramount in accomplishing desired goals and objectives in HEIs (Riabova et al., 2023). Academic honesty and intellectual integrity are central to education. With this background, the paper has focused on studying the existing research that has been done in the area of ethics and higher education over the past four decades. This study has traced how research has developed and progressed over the years.

The research paper attempted to answer three research questions. The first research question attempted to understand the most referenced article in this domain. The citation analysis showed that the most cited article was “Moral Reasoning and Business Ethics: Implications for Research, education, and Management” by Trevino, conducted in 1992. This article has been a fundamental building block on which many future research papers were based. The second research question attempted to explore the journals, countries, institutions, and authors that have contributed extensively to this area of research. The findings of the citation analysis showed that the highly influential journal in this area of research was the *Journal Of Business Ethics*, with 38 articles published in ethics and higher education. At the same time, the most influential Institution was the University of Johannesburg, with seven affiliated articles that contributed to this domain. A look at the country-wise contributions shows that the United States of America dominates the list, followed by the United Kingdom. It was also interesting to note that developing countries have contributed to this research area, highlighting that ethics in higher education also holds an important place in developing countries. There are discussions on practices and policies that support ethics in higher education globally.

The third research question focused on the new research themes in ethics and higher education. To understand this, the researchers performed a co-citation analysis. The results of the co-citation analysis showed that most co-cited co-authors, Trevino (104), Kohlberg (59), and Tang (54), have high citations, which indicate that their work is significant and is often used as the base for other researchers working in this domain. Findings of the co-occurrence of author keywords showed that higher education, with 125 occurrences, was the primary node. Ethics followed this with 59 occurrences, business ethics with 30 occurrences, sustainability with 16 occurrences, and leadership with 13 occurrences. Four clusters were identified that indicated the emerging areas of research. Cluster 1: Ethics as part of business education, Cluster 2: Effect of ethical leadership on higher education, Cluster 3: Teaching, learning and sustainability, and Cluster 4: Unethical behaviour challenges and solutions. These are areas that will further define the journey of research in ethics and higher education in the future.

## IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

From the theoretical perspective, the understanding of ethics and higher education provides a basis for devising policies and strategies that would encourage good governance practices such as academic integrity, fair resource allocation, and fair student and staff treatment. Higher education research on ethics can have an impact on the growth of moral leaders, not just in academia but

also in other fields where graduates hold leadership roles. This study adds to continuing discussions concerning the objectives and principles of education and it embeds in the larger educational philosophy that is closely related to ethics in higher education. The insights provided by this study have future academic and managerial implications. The study has provided a reference base for researchers to identify and refer to the path-breaking articles in ethics and higher education. The study has shown the pathways through the identified four clusters that depict how future research is shaping up. This is key for future researchers to contribute.

## LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The researchers have drawn inferences only based on research articles published in the Scopus database. Although Scopus is a well-accepted and trusted database, it may not cover some important articles that find their indexation only in the Web of Science. Hence this study can be further extended by conducting a bibliometric analysis based on the search results of the Web of Science-indexed journals. It would also be interesting to compare the bibliometric results of both Scopus and Web of Science. The study can also be expanded by studying the nature of research in developed and developing countries to identify gaps, similarities, and differences in their practices.

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