Queen’s REB Guidelines on Bots, Suspicious Datan

Contents

Purpose 1

Identification of Fraudulent Data 1

Documentation and Reporting to the REB 2

Responding to Compensation Demands 2

References 2

Purpose

This guidance outlines the procedures for identifying, managing, and mitigating instances of fraudulent activity and/or data in online research, mainly when such data has been generated by automated systems (bots). This guidance also addresses the ethical considerations surrounding compensation claims made by fraudulent entities. When data provides no value, the cost to researchers is relatively high (i.e., budget concerns, data quality, and research outcomes). This guidance applies to all researchers, faculty, staff, and students at Queen's University involved in online research, including, but not limited to, surveys, experiments, and data collection methods conducted via the internet.

The integrity of research data is paramount, and fraudulent data must be excluded from any analysis or reporting. The following ethical standards have proven potentially problematic for some researchers engaged with online participants:

> Participants are entitled to the specified amount of compensation for participating in, not completing, study activities;
> Participants have the right to withdraw at any time and/or skip any questions without consequence (including their right to compensation);
> When using crowdsourcing platforms (e.g., MTurk, Prolific), researchers are not permitted to reject Human Intelligence Tasks (HITs)/participants as this would harm the participant.

The demand for compensation by "bots" or fraudulent actors raises complex ethical issues, particularly in distinguishing between human and non-human participants and the responsibility for compensation of these non-human or fraudulent participants.

Identification of Fraudulent Data

Researchers should employ methods to detect fraudulent responses, such as:

> Cross-verifying timestamps and response patterns.

Documentation and Reporting to the REB

If the researcher is choosing to deny compensation to