

Ethics in psychological research essay sample

[Sociology](#), [Ethics](#)



Ethics in Psychological Research Animals are kept as pets by millions of people around the world and to most are like a member of the family, but there are some that treat animals as nothing more than an experimentation. There are many reasons people are fighting to end animal testing but the main reason for the fight is the personal beliefs of people. No matter which side a person is on it is still cause to take a look into the treatment of animals in benefiting humans. Scientist and researchers use animals in their experiments every day and although there have been regulations set to protect the animals millions die due to the research. Many of the scientists, researchers and people that are for animal testing do not think that the practice of animal testing is unethical because the animals cannot speak or verbally express if they are in pain or feel poorly about what is going on.

The debate as to whether animal testing is unethical and immoral has been a constant issue of debate for many years. While most humans are not directly affected by the numerous deaths that these animals experience indirectly the people that surround us affects us daily. Ethical dilemmas can come up anytime research is being done and that is the reason that ethics have been put in place. Ethics help steer researchers through ethical problems that could occur when doing research. For example, when do research study is it appropriate not to tell the people participating what the study is for or what they are looking for? Developing ethics in research can help guide researchers when deciding answers to those types of questions.

(Shaughnessy, Zechmeister, & Zechmeister, 2009) According to Velasquez, Andre, Shanks & Meyer (2010),

Ethics is two things. First, ethics refers to well-founded standards of right and wrong that prescribe what humans ought to do, usually in terms of rights, obligations, benefits to society, fairness, or specific virtues. Ethics, for example, refers to those standards that impose the reasonable obligations to refrain from rape, stealing, murder, assault, slander, and fraud. Ethical standards also include those that enjoin virtues of honesty, compassion, and loyalty. And, ethical standards include standards relating to rights, such as the right to life, the right to freedom from injury, and the right to privacy. Such standards are adequate standards of ethics because they are supported by consistent and well-founded reasons.

When performing research, scientists look for facts to try and verify that a theory is true. To obtain that type of answer the research conducted must be ethical. (Shaughnessy, Zechmeister, & Zechmeister, 2009) When starting a research project it must start with the truth or it would jeopardize the whole project. For researchers looking for that truth can be hard and at times truth is different for different people, this is why the APA established a code of ethics, to give researchers an essential guide to help them. The APA's code of ethics guides researchers to evaluate ethical dilemmas when conducting research. Some of the dilemmas that may arise are weighing the benefits and risks associated with the use of deception in regard to participants and the use of animals in research. (Shaughnessy, Zechmeister, & Zechmeister, 2009)

Risk/Benefit Ratio When considering ethical situations a researcher must take into consideration the risk/benefit ratio. “ The risk/benefit ratio is a

subjective evaluation of the risk to a research participant relative to the benefit both to the individual and to society of the results of the proposed research” (Shaughnessy, Zechmeister, & Zechmeister). For research that could do harm or involves a risk to the participants, the researcher must confirm that the total benefit visibly overshadows the risk. Only if there is favorable risk benefit ratio, a study may be considered ethical. Psychologists use the APA guide of ethics to help them determine whether an experiment is ethical, this includes testing on animals. The guide is a set of guidelines but whether a researcher chooses to follow those guidelines is a personal choice; there are consequences if a researcher conducts unethical researcher but by then damage could have already been done to the participants involved.

Animal Testing Testing on animals has been a controversial issue for a long time. The public has been outraged about testing on animals and has voiced its concern through protests and other anti-animal testing. According to Andres & Velasquez (nd), “ About 20 million animals are experimented on and killed annually, three-fourths for medical purposes and the rest to test various products. An estimated eight million are used in painful experiments.” Advocates for animal rights are pressuring government agencies to enforce more limits on animal research. However the more criticism that occurs over the use of animals it is matched by researchers because the limits could create a threat to scientific progress. The Committee on Animal Research and Ethics (C. A. R. E.) was established to address the APA’s members’ concerns and to address the public’s concerns. (American Psychological Association, 2009). C. A. R. E. developed a

comprehensive guide broken down into five categories; the acquisition, care, housing, use, and disposition of animals. The guidelines also follow all federal, state, local, institutional laws, and institutional regulations. Still protesters and animal rights groups are outraged that anyone would test on animal. (Fisher, 1986)

Animal rights groups charge that, “ psychological research contributes little to nothing to human welfare” (Fisher, Pg. 1, 1986) The APA disputes that statement, knowing their research has contributed to a better understanding of how the mind, human behavior, and society works. (Fisher, 1986) Without psychology mental illnesses would not have been researched, diagnosis tools developed, and treatment plans created. Impact of Animal Testing This still leaves the question unanswered, is testing on animals ethical? The APA deems so as long as guidelines are followed and the risk benefit analysis suggests so. Animal rights groups and other individuals disagree, believing strongly that no one should test on animals, regardless of the benefit. Researchers are left to make the choice on their own in regard to testing on animals. Making the choice to test on animals or not to test on animals has consequences either way. If a researcher cannot not test on animals, is it acceptable to test new medications or theories on humans?

Whatever a researcher chooses he or she needs to ensure that it is a choice that will not distract him or her during the research process. Whether testing on animals is ethical comes down to a personal choice and decision; a decision and choice a researcher must be able to live with. Conclusion No matter what side a person takes, testing on animals will always be an issue.

Some people believe that animal research is needed because without it how would we have many of the things we have such as medicine, but others believe that it is wrong to put these animals through all the pain and suffering they might go through. This is where the importance of risk/benefit ratio plays a part in research. Ethics also is a very important part of this kind of testing. Ethics help in guiding researchers into doing what is right and to avoid wrong doing. The impact that animal testing has on society is in the eye of the beholder. There is no right or wrong decision. Animal testing has and will continue to advance many areas in science.

References

American Psychological Association. (2009). Board of Scientific Affairs.

Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org>

Andre, C. & Velasquez, M. (N. D.). Of Cures and Creatures Great and Small.

Retrieved from <http://www.scu.edu/ethics/publications/iie/v1n3/cures.html>

Fisher, K. (1986). Animal research: Few alternatives seen for behavioral studies. *APA Monitor*, 17(3), 16-17. Retrieved from PsycEXTRA database

Pope, K., & Vetter, V. (1992). Ethical dilemmas encountered by members of the American Psychological Association: A national survey. *American Psychologist*, 47(3), 397- 411. doi: 10. 1037/0003-066X. 47. 3. 397.

Shaughnessy, J., Zechmeister, E. B., & Zechmeister, J. S. (2009). *Research Methods in Psychology*, Eighth Edition.

Velasquez, M., Andre, C., Shanks, T. & Meyer, M. J. (2010). What is Ethics?

Retrieved from <http://www.scu.edu/ethics/practicing/decision/whatisethics.html>