

What do ethics have
to do with research?



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Ethical behavior is defined as a set of moral principles, rules or standards governing a person or profession. Most importantly, principles of ethical conduct includes that the researcher should do no harm, that privacy of and anonymity of participants must be protected, that confidentiality of information must be maintained, that informed consent of participants needs to be obtained including assurance that participation is voluntary, with the chance to withdraw from the proposed research, that inappropriate behavior must be avoided, and that, data must be interpreted honestly without distortion. Lastly, the extent to which participants are to share in data ownership and any benefits from the research must be considered.

Although the principles seem straightforward, a series of example were provided that exemplified the difficulty in adhering to the principles, often because situations may have a complex array of conflicting interests. The report presents and identifies range of ethical issues on possible divergence that researchers have to deal with when undertaking or participating in research. Following on, ethical considerations in quantitative and qualitative research the investigator must scrutinize; among others are relevant examples of cases that revolve around unethical issues and the penalty of violation. The role of IRB was discussed, which precedes discussion on how ethical issues in research can be solved the conclusions and final remarks.

Chapter 1

Introduction

What do ethics have to do with research?

Ethical code or moralities are expression of how we should behave as individuals and as a society. They are moral judgments that can be applied

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to particular situations to help us make decisions and guide our behaviors. Without doubt, they are linked to cultural values at a precise time in our history and are subject to change as attitudes and values evolve. What is well thought out to be insensitive today can be normative, just a half century ago. In doing research there may be a conflict between the speedy conduct of a study and the trouble of doing what is deferential to humans or even animals.

While, researchers are focused on knowledge expansion and on the methodology of their projects like personnel and equipment, statistical analysis, selection of subject, research protocols and sample size. At the same time, as essentially accountable persons, they try as much as possible to respect the research environment, which requires attention to the suitable exercise not only of physical resources including funds, but also to animal and human subject matter.

Merely whilst the research is of adequate quality to potentially contribute to knowledge can we justify involving participants and making use of other resources? Ethical considerations may help to decide whether the research should be done, and if so, how it should be pursued. Thus, it is vital to be capable, transparent, sincere, and adhere to ethical guidelines in regard to research subjects.

Definition of Terms:

Research

Pearson: (1995-2010 prentice Hall) Research is the systematic process of collecting and analyzing information to increase our understanding of the

phenomenon under study. It is the function of the researcher to contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon and to communicate that understanding to others.

Ethics:

Consider the problem of definition of 'ethical'. Ethics, as a term, is commonly used to refer both to morals beliefs 'beliefs about what are right and wrong to do' and ethical theory (justifications for moral beliefs) (Beauchamp and Bowie, 1997). Obviously, ethical issues can be raised throughout all phases of research, notably problem definition, stating research objectives/ hypotheses, literature review, choice of research design, questionnaire design, data collection procedures, data editing and cleaning, choice of statistical methods, data analysis, conclusions and recommendations, and even referencing. Writers vary widely on ethical issues in research. Often, they oppose on what is and is not morally satisfactory in social research. Debates about research ethics highlights certain tremendous cases of supposed ethical wrongdoing, although in fact the latent for unethical research is much larger. Some cases of unethical research are often associated with particular research methods, such as disguised observation and deception in experiments. In as much as ethics apply at every stage of the research, it is very imperative as a researcher to uphold ethics in research as this is what the industry mostly needs:

Trust- Decision makers trust researchers to make provision for precise information

Confidentiality and professionalism

Goodwill- This is applicable to the respondent for their willingness to volunteer their personal information on their awareness, manner and deeds.

This paper discusses the significance of ethics in research, considerations the researchers must scrutinize and the penalty of violation. Research must be carried out in a safe and ethical approach. The paper will look into range of ethical issues (procedural ethics, practices and cases of ethical violation) in the next session.

Chapter 2

Ethical issues in research

Ethics is an essential part of any research project. One may assume ethics is just another stage of research, one that is tackled with filing out a standardized set of forms submitted to an ethics committee. (e. g. IRB) may not lend itself to effectively assessing ethical issues. Ethics has become a cornerstone for conducting effective and meaningful research. As such, the ethical behavior of individual researchers is under unprecedented scrutiny (Best & Kahn, 2006; Field & Behrman, 2004; Trimble & Fisher, 2006). In today's society, any concerns regarding ethical practices will negatively influence attitudes about science, and the abuses committed by a few are often the ones that receive widespread publicity (Mauthner, Birch, Jessop, & Miller, 2003). Clearly, researchers have liabilities to their line of work, patrons, and respondent and are obliged to high ethical standards to make certain that both the purpose and the information are not brought into ill repute.

As a branch of philosophy it deals with the dynamic of decision making concerning what is right and wrong. Scientific research works, as all human activities, is overseen by individual, community and social values. Research ethics engage requirements on daily work, the protection of dignity of subjects and information in the research that is being made known. In recent years ethical thoughtfulness have come to forefront, however, as a Doctoral candidate embarking on a research project, participating in research, we must cope with value systems that are very fundamental in the course of the study. The societal value, which is about the human rights, and the values about the scientific query. (Clarke, 1991) points out that the values may clash with value subjects, communities, and societies and create tensions and dilemmas.

Ethics as a discipline deals with the broader value system of our society that encompasses the consensual agreement on what is right and wrong. This set of values is much broader than that which is legislatively defined as legal and illegal. These principles are the essential underpinning that helps to maintain civil and tranquil acceptance and agreement within society. The scientific community needs to address and resolve ethical problems not only because of their natural un-acceptableness to scientific research, but also to avoid the corrosive effect these problems eventually will have, if not resolved, on our society mores. We need to be deeply involved in the ethical dialogue to at least maintain, and if possible, raise the barrier of unethical behavior in science. A climate of silence with regard to these problems will undoubtedly result in lowering ethical barriers, to the detriment of our society. In this paper, the most significant ethical issues will be addressed.

This study will also attempt to highlight the possible divergence that researchers have to deal with when undertaking or participating in research.

Ethical issues that affect research conduct

Whether a researcher is a psychologist, education or anthropologist, the primary responsibilities is to help protect participants and aim should be clear: to consent ought to be obtain, protecting the participants from harm, and privacy should be ensured. Though, there is one area of responsibilities that is often less clear for both the researcher and the participant, which is intentional deception. These areas are covered in more detail below.

Informed Consent: This involves the procedure by which an individual may opt whether or not to be involved in the proposed study by the investigator. The task of the researcher is to make certain that participants have a complete of the purpose and methods to be used in the study, the risk involved, and the demands placed upon them as a participants (Best & Khan, 2006; Jones & Kottler, 2006).) The participant must also understand that he or she has the right to withdraw from the study at any time. The two forms of consent are direct and substitute. Direct consent is the most preferred because agreement is obtained directly from the person to be involved in the study. Substitute consent, or third-party consent, is given by someone other than the person to be involved in the study. Substitute consent may be obtained when it is determined that the person does not have the capacity to make the decision or is dependent on others for his or her welfare, such as children under the age of 18 or people with cognitive or emotional disabilities (Nagy, 2005a; Roberts, Geppert, Coverdale, Louie, & Edenharder,

2005). Both direct and substitute consent must meet the requirements for informed consent.

Harm: Psychologists must take reasonable steps to avoid harming their clients/ patients, students, supervisees, research participants, organizational clients, and others with whom they work, and to minimize harm where it is foreseeable and unavoidable. (American Psychological Association, 2002, p. 6) When psychologists become aware that research procedures have harmed a participant, they take reasonable steps to minimize the harm. (American Psychological Association, 2002, p. 12) The most basic concern in all research is that no individual is harmed by serving as a participant, as suggested above by the APA and AERA codes of ethics. In the context of research ethics, harm may be broadly defined to include extreme physical pain or death, but also involves such factors as psychological stress, personal embarrassment or humiliation, or myriad influences that may adversely affect the participants in a significant way. Certain types of investigations present potential harm to participants. Research that involves physically dangerous treatment may present real possibilities for harm if the treatment is “inflicted” on the participants. Unfortunately, there are examples of investigations in which ethical principles were violated in an extreme fashion (see Young, 2005). Other areas of research are specifically intended to examine the effects of psychological or emotional stress. Such research represents tremendously difficult circumstances, especially when the procedures involve actual “infliction” of stress. There is always the possibility that a subject may become seriously ill (e. g., have a stroke or heart attack) as a result of the stress. In addition, the possibility exists that

the stress itself may be harmful to participants from a psychological standpoint. People who are institutionalized or incarcerated, such as prisoners, person with severe disabilities, or people with serious mental illness, may agree to participate in a study either because they “ should to be able to show evidence of good behavior” or to gain approval of supervisors. Unfortunately, some troubling examples of ethical violations have occurred with the studies involving these individuals (Field & Behrman, 2004; Moser et al., 2004). Highly vulnerable populations should not be taken advantage of in the name of science. Researchers investigating topics involving these individuals must exercise extreme care. Very young children, the elderly, or people with disabilities may be easily convinced that most activities are important, are of little harm, and should be engaged in for the benefit of society (Drew & Hardman, 2007; Quadagno, 2005).

Privacy: Researchers should know that this is the point at which the objective of study and the right to privacy may come into conflict. Frequently, research of this nature is aimed at obtaining information concerning attitudes, beliefs, opinion and behavior. Thus, pursuing the goals of science, while guarding against unnecessary invasion of participant’s privacy, present complex issues. As with other ethical thoughtfulness, privacy has become more and more valued right. Seeking privacy is an act of isolation or confidentiality removed from public view or knowledge.

According to Hill (2005) identifies three imperative elements to confidentiality in research with participants. These are Public confidentiality- not identifying research participants in study reports, presentations and so forth: Social network confidentiality- not passing on information to family

members, friends or other known to the participants, and lastly, third party breach of privacy- where a group or household members reveals something personal about another. (Hill, 2005, p. 75). Privacy considerations in research include both the need to have a safe, private physical location in which the research is conducted, and making sure that participants' privacy through anonymity and confidentiality. For example, both these privacy aspects are high lightened in a UK study with lesbian and gay participations that were vulnerable, due to stigmatized identities (Valentine et al., 2001). However, this study, it is vital to have a safe research space in which participants could speak in private and liberally, and to protect their anonymity and confidentiality so that they were not identifiable.

Deception: This occurs when the researcher provides misleading or withholding information from participants about the project. Deception is permissible when the benefits outweigh the costs. This happens when the investigators present their research as something other than what it is.

Dishonesty should be minimized and when necessary, the degree and effects must be mitigated as much as possible. However to highlight more on this issue, deception refers to either an omission or a commission on the part of the researcher in terms of interactions with participants. An omission deception could mean that investigator does not fully inform participants about important aspect of the study. Other information or part of it is usually withheld.

Commission is a situation in which the researcher lets out false information about the investigation, either to some extent or entirely. More so, the participants may not be aware of the ongoing study, but only to be informed

about a section of it. Secondly, they are aware of their involvement in the study, which is out of the ordinary, giving them misleading information regarding the proposed study or activity. Apparently, in this situation the researcher is misrepresenting the study. Regardless of the precise nature of deception, it has become a very prominent issue for investigators concerned with the ethics of conducting research. As we move through the first decade of the 21st century, deception is receiving widespread attention in educational and social science research with increasing concerns regarding its use on the Internet (Keller & Lee, 2003; Lichtenberg, Heresco-Levy, & Nitzan, 2004; Mishara & Weisstub, 2005; Nagy, 2005c; Pittenger, 2003). The next chapter will discuss ethical considerations in the context of quantitative and qualitative research, how the rationale is to inform researchers as to the ethical issues that possibly will be specific to a given research approach.

Ethical considerations in Quantitative and Qualitative research

Conceptually, the ethical considerations for both quantitative and qualitative research are the same safety and protection of human rights. These are mainly achieved by using the process of informed consent. The utilization of informed consent is problematic in quantitative research, but practically impossible in qualitative methodologies in which the direction that the research takes is largely unknown (Ramos 1989). Munhall (1988) argues that informed consent can be achieved in qualitative research by re-negotiation when in expected events occur, but one can argue in turn that this places greater responsibility on the researchers, as well as requiring them to possess a high level of skill, especially in negotiation.

Ethics and quantitative research

This involves studies of which data that are analyzed are in form of numbers. In this kind of approach, behaviors are counted, accurate answers or miscalculations are counted, and other kinds of measures are documented in terms of quantity. This type of research involves experimental and non experimental research. Ethical issues in experimental research focus on individual protection that receives an intervention. For example, an intervention may involve training participants in group communication where a great deal of self disclosure is required. This is a technique where people are instigated to talk about their feelings, attitudes, and experiences, of which this may be quite personal. In addition to the problems related to participants who receive an experimental treatment, there are also difficult ethical issues involving those who are in a “ placebo” or control group. Such would be the case where one group of students in a high school receives a newly developed science program (experimental treatment) that appears to be very effective, and a second group receives the science program that was used for many years with limited effectiveness (control group). One ethical perspective is that the researcher has the responsibility to provide the new treatment to all participants. However, some researchers may have a very different view. This opposing perspective is often called the natural state argument. This argument contends that the untreated participants are not being denied a benefit they already have; they are merely being left in their natural state.

In the example above, the high school students in the control group continued to receive the science program that had been used in the school

for many years. Clearly, neither of the above positions is acceptable for all research (Field & Behrman, 2004; Gross, 2005; Roberts et al., 2005). Ethical issues also exist in conducting no experimental research where an investigator does not impose or manipulate conditions. Although ethics in no experimental designs (e. g., survey research) are often less complex or harmful than experimental studies, it is important for investigators to be aware of basic principles for protecting the participants, including “ full disclosure and consent.” For example, in survey research, each respondent should be fully informed as to the purpose of the study, participant demographics (e. g., teachers, college students, and the general public), confidentiality of responses, how the results are intended to be used, and who will have access to the data. Bacon and Olsen (2005) also indicate that survey researchers have the ethical responsibility of “ not wasting” a respondent’s time and to only collect data that has utility (real use). Schenk and Williamson (2005), in discussing the ethical responsibilities involved in conducting no experimental research on children, suggest “ if the information gathering activity will not directly benefit the children involved or their community, do not proceed” (p. 17).

Ethics and qualitative research

This kind of approach involves recorded data in narrative descriptions, not numbers. A researcher makes use of qualitative methods to observe and describe conditions rather than control them. An essential ethical principle for qualitative researchers is this: Do not interfere with the natural setting under the study. More to the point is the fact that participant and non participant observations are vital components of qualitative research and are

used extensively in the fields of education, sociology and anthropology. However, each presents unique ethical issues in regards to consent, privacy and deception (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005; Haverkamp, 2005). Informed consent is necessary but can be problematic when relying on observations in a qualitative research study. Although potential harm from treatment is not generally a threat, there are other ethical concerns. Clearly, there is a substantial threat to privacy. A revelation of observed conversations and behaviors could cause harm to participants in their families, communities, or place of employment. In addition, the actual research participants, who have given consent, may not be the only people observed. In natural settings, people move in and out of interactions and settings for many reasons (Creswell, 2005; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

To conclude, from the discussion quantitative and qualitative methods are dissimilar; one approach is not superior to the other, both have recognized strengths and weaknesses and are used preferably in combination. Recognizing the tension between researchers about quantitative and qualitative research, and attempting to comprehend it, may serve to create relevant and distinctive modes of enquiries.

Cases that revolves around unethical issues

As more and more organizations, industries realize the importance of ethics in research; they take initiatives to apply them at every stage of their investigation. Some examples of cases are been looked into below:

Case 1: Two infamous studies of obedience to authority

The ethical principle of beneficence refers to the Hippocratic ‘do no harm’, do not harm. Beauchamp and Childress, puts forward that ‘the principle of beneficence includes the professional mandate to do effective and significant research so as to better serve and promote the welfare of our constituents’. According to the studies Milgram’s (1963) electric shock experiments and Haney, Banks, and Zimbardo’s (1973) prison studies were perceived as villainous, and to further investigate the issues, the experiment conduction was not in accordance with the principles as expected, and more to the point is the fact that, provision for precise intention was not known by the participants. The complex ethical issues raised in this studies relates to the potential harm that was incurred by partakers. Ford and Reutter, (1990) points out that ‘beneficence relates to the benefit of the study, while non malifcence relates to the potential risk of participation. Non malifcence requires a high level of sensitivity from the researcher about what constitutes ‘harm’. While Burns and Grove (2001) ‘discomfort and harm can be physiological, emotional, social and economic in nature’. As a researcher you do not want to do anything that would cause physical or emotional harm to your subjects this could be something as uncomplicated as being cautious how responsive or tricky questions are worded during the experimentation. As stated in the studies, there was no consideration of all possible consequences of test and or balance of the risk with proportionate benefit. Conversely, to justify these benefits there is need for a precise safeguard and guidelines to protect the interest of the subject involved in the experiment conduction.

Case 2: A covert study of unofficial rewards

Researchers involved in research have to consider many ethical problems relating to the issues of informed consent. In addition, they must ascertain that the participants have comprehended fully their right to withdraw at any time. According to the study, Dalton's (1959), one of the key ethical issues is the concerns of lack of informed consent, as participants were in no position to be able to judge whether or not to become involved in the research, as they were only vaguely aware of the nature of researcher's interest.

Consent, can however, be a major ethical issue for researchers, they need to provide full explanation at the end of their data collection, even if they can't disclose to the participants, the true research objectives. Although the strategy of the researcher was to help protect their anonymity. Apparently, the respondent had volunteer to give out there personal information since they trusted the researcher in other words he should protect their dignity and privacy as well. Researchers are expected to obtain informed consent from all those who are directly involved in research or in the vicinity of research. This principle adheres to a larger issue of respect to the participants so that they are not coerced into participation and have access to relevant information prior to the consent.

Case 3: Studying health-seeking behavior

When embarking on a research, one should be sure that they are not taking advantage of easy to access of individuals. Sound ethical suggests that it is the duty of researchers to preserve, protect privacy, dignity, well being and freedom of the participants. Meaning to say potential participants are entitled to know the purpose of and nature of the proposed research so as to

choose whether or not to be involved. According to the case, a team of social scientist are concerned about the improvement of women's health, of which they wants to learn why women do not return to hospital for the results of ' Papanicolaou' (Pap) tests. The aim of the research is to find out how to improve services to these women. As pointed out in the case, social scientists were granted permission to conduct their investigation, and were also provided with records of patience in the hospital with names and addresses so as to enable them visit the patients in their homes. The ethical issues been violated, is the concerns of lack of informed voluntary consent, invasion of privacy and confidentiality. This principle adheres to a larger issue of respect to the respondents assuring that confidentiality of information shared and anonymity won't be revealed. The subjects were to be informed of the proposed research involving them; thereby they can express their views and opinion, knowing that the information is going to be utilized in a confidential manner. It is not justifiable to grant permission to the investigator to use the records of the potential patients without their consent as a matter of fact I will say confidentiality was breached in this situation, of which it wasn't inappropriate that the they paid the patients visit at their residence without their permission.(Adapted from material developed by the UNDP/ UNFPA/WHO/World Bank Special Programme of Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction, Bangkok Thailand, 2004.)

Case 4: Invasion of privacy in visual research

Whether a researcher is a psychologist, educator, or anthropologist, the primary responsibilities to participants are clear: obtain consent, protect

from harm, and ensure privacy. However, there is one area of responsibility that is often less clear for both the researcher and the participants: intentional deception. They may have a combination of these and other characteristics that render them unable to exercise free will and make decisions. For such individuals, the question then becomes one of who can give consent on their behalf and what should be considered in the process. There is a need to constantly be vigilant in these situations. Gall 1996, states that all researchers have good intentions, but if they are not careful, their studies can place individuals in situation that involves risk. The issue in the case revolves around anonymity and confidentiality of which this is potentially more problematic due to the recognizability of what is involved in the proposed research. Participant feel positively about been involved in any test or experiment, it is because of the fact that it will serve as a useful purpose.

Some actually enjoy been the subject and are quick at giving their opinion, while others strongly resent or even mistrust aim of the research. This is as a result of the fact that most participant fear if sophisticated techniques to probe their deepest feeling and utilizing this knowledge might be used against them. In as much as legal issue is more complex, specifically the one pertaining to copyright ownership, researchers are supposed to take measures to protect dignity and privacy for their employment not to be in jeopardy. Researcher should carefully weigh the gains achieved against the cost in human dignity. There should be a provision of full and accurate explanation to participants at the conclusion of study, including counseling, if appropriate. An example is when a researcher pretends to be who they are

not in order to carry out their intention. On the other hand, this method can result into a severe invasion of privacy and the researchers obtain information they would probably never have known.

Case 5: An example of an ethical fieldwork dilemma

Robbins and Trabichet (2009) defined a dilemma as ‘ a situation where one has to choose between two options but does not know which side to take because both seem legitimate’ (p. 52). Complexity and uncertainty are other distinguishing characteristics of an ethical dilemma, “ Ethical dilemmas are dilemmas because the right course of action is not always clearly visible” (Liddell, Cooper, Healy, & Stewart., 2010, p14). Kitchener (1984) described an ethical dilemma as a situation where “ there are good, but contradictory ethical reasons to take conflicting and incompatible courses of actions” (p. 43). In the case of Holliday (1995: 17-18) the issues of ethical dilemma faced was that the participant was technically coerced in committing industrial espionage.

This involves such unethical and or illegal behavior so as to help disclose operational secrets or even production formulas. This is not intentional but due to the crisis pressuring the company owner, he was looking for a means of helping his business succeed. Each company’s culture is different, but some stress profits and results above all else. In the ongoing situation within the company setting, the company owner has turned a blind eye to ethical breaches since the participant has no choice other than to execute the proposed intent offered, giving the firm’s mentality of the end justifies the means.

Conclusively for the cases, ethical issues, conflicting values and ambiguity in making of decision, are persistently emerging from literature review on research. Due to lack of simplicity in ethical standards researchers must endeavor to develop an awareness of this issues and an effectual framework to deal with these problem involving human rights. This is very obligatory in order to come into terms with the issues of the researcher's value relative to the rights of individual versus the interest society. As long as there are professional codes, laws, regulations, and ethics committees can make provisions for guidance but the final determinant of how research is conducted, rest with the researcher's value system and moral code.

Chapter 3

Discussion on how ethical issues in research can be solved

As researchers or students, you are bounded by the code of conducts and ethical standards imposed by college or university. In as much as there is an establishment with Institutional Review boards (IRBs), their job is to make certain that, research involving human subjects must be reviewed, approved and monitored. This is a design made for critical oversight. As pointed out by Bi