

## Ethics of psychological research

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### Abstract

#### Introduction

Many different disciplines, institutions, and professions have norms for behaviour that suit their particular aims and goals. These norms also help members of the discipline to coordinate their actions or activities and to establish the public's trust of the discipline. For instance, ethical norms govern conduct in medicine, law, engineering, and business. Ethical norms also serve the aims or goals of research and apply to people who conduct scientific research or other scholarly or creative activities. There is even a specialized discipline, research ethics, which studies these norms.

#### Principles of Research Ethics

- Professional Competence
- Integrity
- Professional, Scientific, and Scholarly Responsibility
- Respect for People's Rights, Dignity, and Diversity
- Social Responsibility

#### Conclusion

It can be concluded that research ethics should be adhered by every researcher. Although they have been ignored in the past, such a thing cannot be done in the present. The world has changed and so has the criteria of what is right. Although research ethics are transforming, its importance is increasingly accepted throughout the world.

**KEYWORDS:** Research, Ethics, Principles, Limitations, Present situations

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#### • Introduction

When most people think of ethics (or morals), they think of rules for distinguishing between right and wrong, such as the Golden Rule ("Do unto others as you would have them do unto you"), a code of professional conduct like the Hippocratic Oath ("First of all, do no harm"), a religious creed like the Ten Commandments ("Thou Shalt not kill..."), or a wise aphorisms like the sayings of Confucius. This is the most common way of defining "ethics": norms for conduct that distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

Most people learn ethical norms at home, at school, in church, or in other social settings. Although most people acquire their sense of right and wrong during childhood, moral development occurs throughout life and human beings pass through different stages of growth as they mature. Ethical norms are so ubiquitous that one might be tempted to regard them as simple commonsense. On the other hand, if

morality were nothing more than commonsense, then why are there so many ethical disputes and issues in our society?

One plausible explanation of these disagreements is that all people recognize some common ethical norms but different individuals interpret, apply, and balance these norms in different ways in light of their own values and life experiences.

Most societies also have legal rules that govern behaviour, but ethical norms tend to be broader and more informal than laws. Although most societies use laws to enforce widely accepted moral standards and ethical and legal rules use similar concepts, it is important to remember that ethics and law are not the same. An action may be legal but unethical or illegal but ethical. We can also use ethical concepts and principles to criticize, evaluate, propose, or interpret laws. Indeed, in the last century, many social reformers urged citizens to disobey laws in order to protest what they regarded as immoral or unjust laws. Peaceful civil disobedience is an ethical way of expressing political viewpoints.

Many different disciplines, institutions, and professions have norms for behaviour that suit their particular aims and goals. These norms also help members of the discipline to coordinate their actions or activities and to establish the public's trust of the discipline. For instance, ethical norms govern conduct in medicine, law, engineering, and business. Ethical norms also serve the aims or goals of research and apply to people who conduct scientific research or other scholarly or creative activities. There is even a specialized discipline, research ethics, which studies these norms.

- **Principles of Research Ethics**

Some principles of research ethics are universally accepted. These serve as a guide for education researchers in determining ethical courses of action in various contexts. They exemplify the highest ideals of professional conduct. These are, but not limited to, the following:

- Professional Competence

Education researchers strive to maintain the highest levels of competence in their work; they recognize the limitations of their expertise; and they undertake only those tasks for which they are qualified by education, training, or experience. They recognize the need for ongoing education in order to remain professionally competent; and they utilize the appropriate scientific, scholarly, professional, technical, and administrative resources needed to ensure competence in their professional activities. They consult with other professionals when necessary for the benefit of their students, research participants, and clients.

- Integrity

Education researchers are honest, fair, and respectful of others in their professional activities—in research, teaching, practice, and service. Education researchers do not knowingly act in ways that jeopardize the welfare of others. Education researchers conduct their professional activities in ways that are worthy of trust and confidence.

- Professional, Scientific, and Scholarly Responsibility

Education researchers adhere to the highest scientific and professional standards and accept responsibility for their work. Education researchers value the public trust in research and are concerned about their ethical behaviour and the behaviour of other education researchers that might compromise that trust. Education researchers

understand that they form a community and show respect for other education researchers even when they disagree on theoretical, methodological, or personal approaches to professional activities. While endeavouring always to be collegial, education researchers must never let the desire to be collegial outweigh their shared responsibility for ethical behaviour. When appropriate, they consult with colleagues in order to prevent or avoid unethical conduct.

- Respect for People's Rights, Dignity, and Diversity

Education researchers respect the rights, dignity, and worth of all people and take care to do no harm in the conduct of their work. In their research, they have a special obligation to protect the rights, welfare, and dignity of research participants. They are sensitive to cultural, individual, and role differences in teaching, studying, and providing service to groups of people with distinctive characteristics. They strive to eliminate bias in their professional activities, and they do not tolerate any forms of discrimination based on race; ethnicity; culture; national origin; gender; sexual orientation; gender identity; age; religion; language; disability; health conditions; socioeconomic status; or marital, domestic, or parental status. In all of their work-related activities, education researchers acknowledge the rights of others to hold values, attitudes, and opinions that differ from their own, and they treat others with dignity and respect.

- Social Responsibility

Education researchers are aware of their professional and scientific responsibility to the communities and societies in which they live and work. They apply and make public their knowledge in order to contribute to the public good. When undertaking research, they strive to advance scientific and scholarly knowledge and to serve the public good.

There are far too many principles of research ethics to be described in detail.

- **Limitations due to Ethics**

This is all very fair but what does this mean for researchers? Classic social psychology studies by Zimbardo and Milgram for example probably would have never taken place if it was conducted according to accepted ethics.

The experiments were controversial, and considered by some scientists to be unethical and physically or psychologically abusive. Psychologist Diana Baumrind considered the experiment "harmful because it may cause permanent psychological damage and cause people to be less trusting in the future."

- **Conclusion**

It can be concluded that research ethics should be adhered to by every researcher. Although they have been ignored in the past, such a thing cannot be done in the present. The world has changed and so has the criteria of what is right. Although research ethics are transforming, their importance is increasingly accepted throughout the world.

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