

Chapater 3

Participants and Research Ethics

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Research Fundamental

1. Participants
2. The law and Research
3. Rights of People Directly Involved
 - Rights of participants
4. Responsibilities of an Ethical Researcher

PARTICIPANTS

- people directly or indirectly involved in your research
 - the people you interview, observe or ask to complete a questionnaire or supply you with documents
- should treat participants involved (directly or indirectly) in research: fairly and with honesty
 - ethical researcher
- require that you consider the ethical aspects of your research project when you design it
 - obtain ethical clearance before you start
- people affected by the research in any way will not be harmed and will be treated fairly and with dignity
- research → ethical → approved → start
- research → unethical (any part) → researcher will be asked to think again → redesign the project.

- research and behaviour throughout the project, from literature review to the final outcomes: must be legal
- find out about the law in your country concerning such things as:
 - ① Data Protection Rights and Duties
 - ② Prize Draws and Research Participation
 - ③ Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)
 - ④ Technology Restrictions
 - ⑤ Software Developers' Legal Liability

Data Protection Rights and Duties

- Individual Rights:
 - Individuals have the right to control their personal data
 - Researchers must handle data responsibly, ensuring privacy and security
 - Example: Suppose you're conducting a survey
 - You must inform participants how their data will be used and obtain their consent
- Duties of Organizations and Researchers:
 - Organizations must comply with data protection laws (such as GDPR in the EU)
 - Researchers should obtain informed consent, protect data, and handle it only for legitimate purposes
 - Example: If you're collecting health data for medical research, ensure strict confidentiality and compliance with relevant regulations

Prize Draws and Research Participation

- Offering prize draws can encourage participation, but ethical considerations apply:
 - Clearly state the terms and conditions
 - Ensure that participation is voluntary and not force or threat
 - Avoid biasing results by attracting participants solely for prizes
 - Example: In a study on consumer preferences, you offer a gift card as an incentive
 - communicate that participation is optional, and the prize doesn't affect the study outcome

Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)

- legal protections for creations such as inventions, artistic works, designs, symbols, and names
- for example, who owns the right to an image you want to use in your research, and who has the copyright of your own thesis or other publications or any software you produce

Technology Restrictions

- restrictions on the kinds of technology you are allowed to use and investigate
- Example
 - whether your country allows unrestricted access to the Internet
 - If developing a secure messaging app, verify that encryption complies with national regulations

Software Developers' Legal Liability

- the legal liability of software developers for the systems they design and create
- Example: If you develop a medical diagnosis app, rigorous testing and proper disclaimers are crucial to avoid harm to users.

Rights of People Directly Involved

- rights of the people most obviously affected by your research
 - the people you interview or observe, or ask to complete a questionnaire or supply you with documents
- the different terms used to refer to the people most directly impacted by your research
 - ① **Research Subjects (Experiments)**
 - ② **Research Respondents (Surveys)**
 - ③ **Research Informants or Members (Case Studies and Ethnography)**
 - ④ **Research Participants or Co-Researchers (Action Research)**
- all participants are humans
 - They have a **right** to be treated with dignity and, whenever possible, to gain some benefit from the research
 - You should consider carefully whether your work is both ethical and legal
 - ensure that your participants suffer no adverse consequences: physiological, psychological, social, political or economic

Research Subjects (Experiments)

- In experimental research, individuals who participate in controlled experiments are often referred to as research subjects.
- Example: If you're conducting a study on the effects of a new drug, the patients receiving the drug become your research subjects.

Research Respondents (Surveys)

- When collecting data through surveys or questionnaires, the individuals who respond are called research respondents.
- Example: If you distribute a survey about online shopping habits, the people who complete the survey are your research respondents.

Research Informants or Members (Case Studies and Ethnography)

- In case studies and ethnographic research, individuals who share information, experiences, or insights with the researcher are called informants or members
- Example: If you're studying a specific community's cultural practices, the community members who provide insights become your research informants.

Research Participants or Co-Researchers (Action Research)

- In action research, individuals actively engage in the research process. They may collaborate with the researcher, especially in more emancipatory forms of action research
- Example: If you're working with a group of teachers to improve classroom practices, they are both research participants and co-researchers.

Rights of participants

- Right not to participate
- Right to withdraw
- Right to give informed consent
- Right to anonymity
- Right to confidentiality

Right not to participate

- Participants have the right to decline participation in a study without any negative consequences
 - Researchers should respect their autonomy and not try to force them with threats
- Non-participation may affect the ability to complete research
 - that's researcher's problem, not theirs (participants)
- Example: If someone declines to be part of a survey on the shopping experience, their decision should be honoured.

Right to withdraw

- Participants can withdraw from a study at any time, even after initially agreeing to participate
- Researchers must inform participants of this right during the consent process
- Example: by declining to answer certain questions or by refusing to participate in some activities.

Right to give informed consent

- Participants have the right to receive clear and comprehensive information about the study before agreeing to participate
- Participants must be informed about:
 - the purpose of the research, why it is being undertaken and what benefits are expected from it
 - who is undertaking the research (name, address, contact details) and which organization is sponsoring it — either by funding it or overseeing and authorizing it
 - what will be involved (for example, interviews, completing a questionnaire and so on) and how long this is likely to take
 - whether they will receive any expenses, payment or incentive (for example, individual feedback on performance in a test, or a copy of the final research report);
 - how their data will be used and how the research findings will be disseminated.
- must also be informed that they have the right not to participate and the right to withdraw from the research at any time

Right to anonymity

- Participants in research have the right that their identity and location will be protected by disguise where necessary
- Researchers should use codes or pseudonyms to protect privacy
- Example: In an online survey, participants' names are not associated with their answers.

Right to confidentiality

- Researchers must keep participants' information confidential
- Data should be securely stored and accessible only to authorized personnel
- Researchers should not pass on sensitive information learned about participants to others in positions of authority (unless legally required)
- Example: If conducting interviews, avoid sharing specific quotes that could identify individual participants

- Is it ever justifiable to withhold from participants the aims of the research?
- Is it ever justifiable to carry out research when the subjects of the research cannot give informed consent?
- Is it justifiable to use people as the objects of research?
- Is it justifiable to carry out research that will solely or mainly benefit the researcher by, for example, leading to a PhD?
- Is it justifiable to carry out research when those funding the project retain the right to censor the findings?
- Is it justifiable to accept funding for health research from the tobacco industry?
- Is it justifiable to carry out research when the findings might be used to reduce staffing levels or withdraw treatment from certain categories of patients?

Responsibilities of an Ethical Researcher

- Ethical researchers can infer (conclude) their responsibilities from the rights of participants
 - researchers should respect participants' expectations of anonymity and confidentiality
 - they should not try to force (coerce) people into participating in the research
 - they should obtain informed consent and not deceive people about the research

Responsibilities of an Ethical Researcher

- No unnecessary intrusion
- Behave with integrity
- Follow appropriate professional codes of conduct
- No plagiarism
- Be an ethical reviewer

No unnecessary intrusion

- Researchers should respect the privacy and autonomy of individuals or groups they study
- Avoid unnecessary intrusion into their lives or personal spaces
- Obtain informed consent from participants before collecting data, especially in sensitive areas such as medical research or social studies
- Example, in designing questionnaires, researchers sometimes automatically insert questions asking about the participants' age, which respondents may find intrusive.

Behave with Integrity

- Integrity is crucial in research: involves honesty, transparency, and ethical behavior
- Researchers should accurately report their findings, even if those findings challenge their initial hypotheses
- ethical researcher also thinks about how the research findings will be used and tries to make sure they can do no harm

Follow Appropriate Professional Codes of Conduct

- Most professional bodies have produced codes of conduct
- Codes capture the profession's commitments and responsibilities, to help members make ethical decisions

No Plagiarism

- Plagiarism undermines the credibility of research
- Always attribute sources properly
 - When citing previous work, ideas, or data, follow the appropriate citation style (e.g., APA, MLA, etc.)

Be an Ethical Reviewer

- If you review research papers or grant proposals, evaluate them fairly and without bias
- Maintain confidentiality during peer review
- Provide constructive feedback to improve the quality of research