

IRB Approval Requirements

You said:



I have a problem related to Data Analysis for Social Scientist, as shown below. Please help to answer:

You are interested in doing a project on jail sentences and recidivism. You find publicly available data listing plea deals and court decisions resulting in jail sentences for Middlesex County, Massachusetts. The list contains de-identified information on offense, sex, age, and prison of incarceration. You scrape the data and perform some preliminary analysis. You wish to contact the prisoners and ask each to participate in a survey. You then survey those who are willing and analyze the resulting data.

(Fill the blank) You must obtain approval from your IRB before _____.

- A. You administer your survey.
- B. You do any preliminary analysis.
- C. You contact the prisoners.
- D. You scrape the data.

ChatGPT said:



The correct answer is **C. You contact the prisoners.**

You must obtain approval from your Institutional Review Board (IRB) before you contact the prisoners. The IRB's role is to ensure that any research involving human subjects is conducted ethically, with informed consent, and with protections for the participants' rights and well-being. Contacting prisoners to participate in a survey would involve human subjects research, which requires prior IRB approval to ensure that the study meets ethical standards.

You said:



From the problem and answer, please extract all specific terms. Then, explain each with an analogy and a quantitative example.

ChatGPT said:



Here are the specific terms extracted from the problem and answer:

1. **Recidivism**
2. **Plea deals**
3. **Court decisions**
4. **Middlesex County, Massachusetts**
5. **De-identified information**
6. **Preliminary analysis**
7. **Survey**
8. **IRB (Institutional Review Board)**

1. Recidivism

- **Analogy:** Think of recidivism as a boomerang that, when thrown, keeps coming back. Despite efforts to throw it away, it returns to where it started.
- **Quantitative Example:** If 100 people are released from prison and 40 of them return to prison within two years, the recidivism rate is 40%.

2. Plea Deals

- **Analogy:** Imagine you're playing a game where you can either take a sure small reward now or risk it all for a potentially bigger reward later. A plea deal is like taking the sure reward—accepting a known outcome instead of gambling on a trial.
- **Quantitative Example:** If 100 cases are brought to court and 70 are resolved by plea deals, this means 70% of the cases are settled without going to trial.

3. Court Decisions

- **Analogy:** Court decisions are like the final move in a chess game, determining who wins or loses. The judge or jury decides the outcome, just as the final move decides the game.
- **Quantitative Example:** If a judge hears 50 cases and rules in favor of the plaintiff in 30 of them, the court has made 30 decisions in favor of the plaintiff.

4. Middlesex County, Massachusetts

- **Analogy:** Think of Middlesex County as a specific neighborhood within a city. It's one part of a larger area (Massachusetts) with its own local issues and characteristics.
- **Quantitative Example:** Middlesex County has a population of about 1.6 million people. If you survey 1,000 prisoners in this county, that's a small but focused sample of this specific area.

5. De-identified Information

- **Analogy:** Imagine a photograph where all the faces are blurred. You can see the general scene but can't identify any individuals. De-identified information works the same way; it provides data without revealing who the individuals are.
- **Quantitative Example:** If you have a dataset of 10,000 prisoners' records with names removed, and you perform analysis without knowing who the individuals are, that data is considered de-identified.

6. Preliminary Analysis

- **Analogy:** Preliminary analysis is like tasting the batter before baking a cake. It gives you an early sense of what the final product will be like, allowing you to adjust as needed before moving forward.
- **Quantitative Example:** If you have data on 500 cases and you calculate basic statistics (like the average age of prisoners), you are performing a preliminary analysis to guide your future work.

7. Survey

- **Analogy:** A survey is like sending out invitations to a party and asking for RSVPs. You're gathering information from people to see who is interested and what their preferences are.
- **Quantitative Example:** If you send a survey to 1,000 prisoners and 200 respond, you have a 20% response rate.

8. IRB (Institutional Review Board)

- **Analogy:** The IRB is like the safety inspector before a big event. They ensure that everything is safe, ethical, and ready for participants before the event can proceed.
- **Quantitative Example:** If you plan to survey 300 prisoners, you need to get approval from the IRB first. The IRB will review your plan to ensure it's ethical, considering factors like consent and confidentiality.

You said:



can you show the complete step order for conducting the survey?

ChatGPT said:



Certainly! Here is a step-by-step order for conducting the survey on jail sentences and recidivism, ensuring all necessary ethical and practical steps are taken:

1. Define the Research Objective

- Clearly outline the goals of your survey. What specific information are you trying to gather? How will it contribute to your understanding of jail sentences and recidivism?

2. Review Relevant Literature

- Conduct a literature review to understand existing research on the topic. This helps in framing your survey questions and identifying gaps that your research can fill.

3. Develop the Survey Instrument

- Create the survey questions. Ensure that the questions are clear, unbiased, and relevant to your research objectives. Include questions on offense, sex, age, prison of incarceration, and other relevant factors.

4. Prepare a Research Proposal

- Write a detailed research proposal. This should include your research objectives, methodology, survey instrument, data collection procedures, and plans for data analysis.

5. Submit the Proposal to the IRB

- Submit your research proposal to your Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval. The IRB will review your study to ensure it meets ethical standards, particularly regarding the treatment of human subjects (in this case, prisoners).

6. Obtain IRB Approval

- Wait for the IRB to review your proposal. They may ask for revisions or additional information. Once you have addressed their concerns, you will receive IRB approval to proceed with your research.

7. Obtain Access to the Prisoners

- Work with prison officials to obtain access to the prisoners. This may involve additional permissions or negotiations to ensure that the survey can be conducted ethically and securely within the prison environment.

8. Recruit Participants

- Contact the prisoners to invite them to participate in your survey. This must be done in a way that respects their rights and provides clear information about the study, including its purpose, what participation involves, and the voluntary nature of participation.

9. Obtain Informed Consent

- Ensure that each participant gives informed consent before they begin the survey. They should understand their rights, the nature of the study, and any potential risks or benefits of participation.

10. Administer the Survey

- Conduct the survey according to the plan outlined in your research proposal. This could be done in person, via mail, or using electronic means, depending on what is feasible and allowed in the prison setting.

11. Collect and Secure the Data

- Gather the survey responses and ensure that the data is securely stored. De-identify the data to protect the anonymity of the participants, if not already done.

12. Perform Data Cleaning

- Before analyzing the data, clean it to remove any errors, inconsistencies, or irrelevant responses. This step is crucial for ensuring that your analysis is based on accurate and reliable data.

13. Conduct Preliminary Analysis

- Perform a preliminary analysis of the data to identify any trends or issues that may require further investigation or adjustment in your analysis plan.

14. Analyze the Data

- Use statistical methods to analyze the survey data. Look for patterns, correlations, or insights related to jail sentences and recidivism. This analysis should be guided by your research objectives and the hypotheses you aim to test.

15. Interpret the Results

- Interpret the findings of your analysis in the context of your research question. Consider the implications of your findings for understanding recidivism and the effectiveness of jail sentences.

16. Report the Findings

- Prepare a report or paper that presents your findings, including the methodology, analysis, and conclusions. Ensure that the report is clear, concise, and accessible to your intended audience.

17. Submit to a Peer-Reviewed Journal or Conference

- If appropriate, submit your research for publication in a peer-reviewed journal or present it at a conference. This step allows you to share your findings with the broader academic community.

18. Follow Up with Participants (Optional)

- If you indicated that you would provide participants with the results of the study, ensure that you do so. This could also involve sharing findings with prison authorities or policymakers to inform future decisions.

19. Reflect and Plan for Future Research

- Reflect on the process and the findings. Consider what worked well, what didn't, and how the research could be expanded or improved in future studies.

This complete step-by-step order ensures that the survey is conducted ethically, effectively, and in line with best practices in research involving human subjects.

ChatGPT can make mistakes. Check important info.