

An overview of the importance of Ethics in Educational Research as per International standards

Yudhistir S.M.F. Jugessur PhD, Dr Vanessa GB Gowreesunkar , PhD

1. Yudhistir S.M.F. Jugessur PhD Student at the Open University of Mauritius, Reduit.

2. Co- author Dr Vanessa GB Gowreesunkar , PhD Supervisor

ABSTRACT: The European Commission EC (2017) , through Directive 2001/20/EC , stated that for good clinical practice, , informed consent is needed for the conduct of clinical trials and the principle of informed consent and free decision is valid for any other kind of research such as Research in Education . Informed consent is defined as the decision with it put on paper, dated and signed that the patient accepts to take part of the research freely, after having been informed of the nature , importance , what the research study imply and the associated risks of the research. Kitchener (1984) and Van Hoose and Paradise (1979) had done studies on the Ethical practice of a professional such as a counselor and his clients. The World Medical Association WMA, (2018) , at the Declaration of Helsinki Ethical principles article 20 and 24 mention of benefits of the research group and duty of the researcher to maintain confidentiality of the respondents. Considering the impact of ethics and its importance, at the Open University of Mauritius, PhD and DBA students were informed that as from October 2020, every PhD/DBA student must apply for research ethics clearance before collecting any data. Before that date, prior to October 2020, students had to follow these same Ethical standards without any need to pass through the Ethical Research Clearance Committee. SLU (2021) further argued that a PhD student need to be aware of ethics and is critical to avoid Scientific misconduct such as plagiarism, fraud and intellectual property theft. A professional, an academia, a scholar and a PhD student cannot have in his possession intellectual materials belonging to someone else, without consent of the author. Unethical hacking is very common among intellectual property thieves. There are often suspicion of unethical hacking when a researcher, a PhD student never gave to someone a research paper and that person make comments on the content of the paper. An animal and a plant cannot give consent but while doing research on animals and the environmental , ethical considerations need to be respected. Ethics also covers aspects whereby there are misuse of a research such as Nuclear power and bacteriological weapon by armies and Terrorists. This paper described what is ethics and why it is important, how to maintain an ethical research conduct as well as the consequences of unethical conduct. ENL (2018) and MIE (2018) also preconize that when there is any reasonable suspicion of any breach of ethics, the matter need to be reported unless the person acted in good faith and without any malicious intention as described by Kitchener (1984) and Van Hoose and Paradise (1979). The UNICEF (2021) imposes itself as a watchdog for the rights of children and had outlined some principles and guidelines so that children's rights are obeyed as per international conventions. Santelli et al (2017) mentioned of the importance of inclusion in a research as part of ethics. Inclusion in a research study imply the right to be part of a research and received benefits as other participants receives. Ethical considerations involves informing the participants of the purpose of the study, the aim of the study, who is doing the study and for whom , for what university or organization. Consent, assent , parental permission, risks involved, protection of name, picture blurred , area where research conducted identifiable, risk of reprisal, parents political, social classes, culture, benefits to be obtained, duration of the research , language in which interview is conducted, any paper on which the respondent will need to answer on, through what medium the questions will be asked, by email, by online questionnaires, face to face interviews, are some of the issues to consider for an ethical research.

KEYWORDS: Ethics, Educational research, EC, WMA, UNICEF, Child, Ethical Guidelines

Date of Submission: 02-04-2022

Date of Acceptance: 16-04-2022

I. INTRODUCTION

Former USA President Obama was a great believer in Ethics and when he was elected as president of the United States of America. He had said that he would make his government be the most openness, transparent accountable government in history, ranging from influence of lobbyists , accountability to federal spending, engagement with public, shutting down the "revolving door" .President Obama mentioned of the highest standards of the government. Educational Ethics is concerned with highest standards (The White House, 2009). According to LaFollette (1994a :261) scientists ,researchers, scholars are truth seekers and their duties

are to produce new knowledge and describe phenomenon. Emphasis of the study should be on trust and accountability. Knowledge and truth are the central of the research rather wealth and power (LaFollette, 1994a). This is where the concept of Ethics enters in any piece of research.

1.1 Research objectives Ethics is an integral part a of any research work. At any stage from title , problem identification , objectives, sample of study, data collection, method of study, analysis and interpretation, at each and every stage , Ethical consideration must be taken into account. The question that researchers often ask if what is ethical and what is unethical? Kfir and Shamai (2002) stated that Ethical code of conduct might vary from field to field and it depends on the academic discipline the research is conducted and the profession of the researcher. The objective of this paper is to show describe the ethical considerations and its impact in research. The sources of Ethical standards from international organization are discussed in the paper. The paper also identifies the importance of ethics in research and in the conduct of any discipline. Emphasis is drawn on medical research such as human testing and animal testing since certain Ethical considerations are more relevant and implies also some legal perspective like for example medical testing on drugs. The aim of this research is to clarify any doubts of the meaning, importance and relevance of Ethics in any research part. Robinson et al (2011) described a research gap as a void that needs to be fill in research. It is an unexplored aspect in one's area of research. In this particular paper, the gap identified is the inclusion of ethical considerations in research. Very little literature exists in ethics and its importance in research work thus there is a need to explore this area.

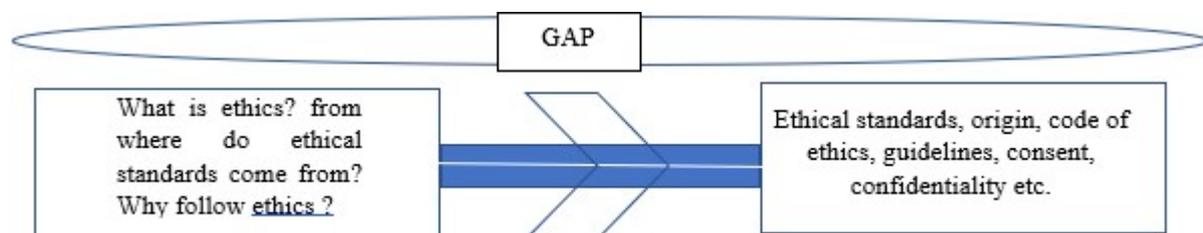


Figure 1 illustration gap before and after

1.2 Ethics in Education and medical field difference

The ethical considerations in the field of Education is different from the ethical consideration of the field of Medical Science or Engineering. In the field of education the sample of study is often minors , thus responsible parties have a role to play in the research. In Medical field the main objectives is advancement in the medical field to save as many lives as possible and certain aspects such as medical trial are involved , blood transfusion and operations. It is often a matter of life or death, particularly animal testing. Ethics in Educational research is not a matter of life or death. It implies a communication with minors, stakeholders and the risk compared to medical field is minimum. In the Educational field a teacher can correct the script of a student without even knowing his name and from which school he is whereas of a Doctor diagnoses the assumed illness of a patient and prescribed medication , without even having seen the patient, it can lead to the Doctor's name removed from the list of Doctors and forbidden to practice again. In later parts, of this paper some case studies of some Misconduct of research will be described. The impact of unethical considerations can have serious consequences to the society. Even WHO , the world health organizations had warned the public about misinformation and false news. From their research in Educational Field , BERA (2011), Hammersley and Traianou (2012) and Smith (2002) stated that while doing a study, ethical consideration is important due to responsibility towards Participants, the Users, the Area and towards the Research Community. In the field of education the participants can be the students, teachers and difference stake holders such as parents. The users include all those who are involved in education and for whom the research might be of use and considerations, including the Government. The Area is Education and concerning the research community , it is still a vague concept. Researchers at degree level and at post graduates level do not have the same responsibilities. BERA (2011), Hammersley and Traianou (2012) and Smith (2002) furthermore added that ethical principles in educational research are the potential risk and harm the participants are exposed to, the autonomy of the participants whereby they are not forced to participate, not compelled to answer and they can move out of the exercise at any time. Protection of privacy from both sides. The research will not disclose the details collected from the participants personal life and the participant will not disclose the content of the data collection exercise.

Fehr & Gächter (2000) also mention of reciprocity , whereby it refers to in-kind exchanges between the researcher and respondent. It is normally about returning a favour in doing the research. Unfortunately the research then become a sort of business transaction and in case it involves professional from the Civil Service, and any form of gratification involved, then it can be a form of bribery. Any conflictual situation must be avoided such as respondent and the university over the researcher, getting in contact before that the researcher

question the respondent. A form of reasonable reciprocity can be the respondent will be provided a copy of the research paper, free of charge. If it is a business, the respondent can even get free publicity. Equitable treatment of participant is also important such as all respondent get the same question to answer and not some get difficult questions, others embarrassing questions, and some funny questions to answer. Consent is another very crucial part of ethics.

1.3 Structure of the study

After a brief of the research in the abstract part, the first part of the study introduces to the concept of ethics in research and its implications. The next parts literature provides an overview of ethics in various field of study and from international standards. The next chapter describe how the methodology has been planned for this research and this results in the findings whereby some justifications of some ethical practices are elaborated.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Wellington (2000) argued that ethics are the moral principles that guide conduct in a group. According to Brooks et al. (2014) , Pring (2003, Stutchbury and Fox (2009),utilitarianism and deontology are two ethical theories. Utilitarian or consequentialist ethics refers to research as beneficial to both the researcher and members of review boards. For the Deontology theory, the consequences of the research is not important as long as the objectives are met. Fendler (2016) identified four ethical issues related to data handling such as bootstrapping which refers to fitting new constructs into existing frameworks, stereotyping whereby there is generalization from one group of participants to other populations, dehumanization where it involves are non-human experiments and determinism where prediction are made from research. Tangen (2014) made use of ethical matrices to explore the ethical questions in a research . It involved both quality and protection of respondents.

When doing research involving minors and children certain specific considerations need to be adopted. certain international organizations such as the UNICEF (2021), are watchdogs to ensure that children’s right are protect everywhere, especially those who are most disadvantaged. UNICEF (2021) is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and is mandated to establish children’s rights and that the ethical principles and international standards towards wellbeing of children are obeyed. Research involving children and reporting on minors can be argued to be of same magnitude whereby the sample of study are children, students and minors.

UNICEF (2021) stated that reporting on children can prove to be challenging the children are at risks of dangers such as retribution and even face stigmatization. As a result, the UNICEF (2021) developed a set of guidelines to follow for ethical reporting, in the best interest of the children's rights. These principles are tabulated below.

No.	Ethical principles	Description
1	Dignity	Respect of the child’s dignity and rights at all times
2	Privacy and confidentiality	Privacy and confidentiality to protect them from any act of reprisal and threats.
3	Interest of the child	The interest of the child must come first rather than own personal gain
4	Age and maturity consideration	The age and maturity of the child need to be assessed when collection data
5	Consult those closest to the child	Those closest to the child such as his parents must be question on sensible issues like politics, social norms and culture.
6	Risks for the child and peers	Stories and images of minors that can cause prejudice to the minor should not be published.

Table 1 . Six Ethical Principles for reporting on children . Source UNICEF, 2021,

Other guidelines put forward by the UNICEF (2021) while performing an interview are summarized below in the table.

No.	Ethical Norms	Description
1	Do Not harm. Avoid trauma	The child should not be harmed and questions that can humiliate, hurt the sensitivity of the child must be avoided.
2	Discrimination	Discrimination based on sex, race, age, religion, status, educational background or physical abilities are forbidden.
3	No Staging	Avoid asking out of context matters to children
4	Responsible party must be made aware	The parents, guardians, responsible parties must be made aware of the purpose of the interview beforehand talking with the child.
5	Permission	Permission from parents must be obtained
6	Where the interview takes place. Environment	In situation where videos, photographs are taken, the area where the picture is taken, in his locality , his house, attention must be taken to avoid putting in danger the child and his family if his whereabouts are shown to the world.
7	Accurate	An accurate account of the data must be reported.
8	Name and identify protection	The real name and identify of the child must be bared and visual image obscure in cases of a victim of sexual abuse, a perpetrator of physical or sexual abuse, HIV positive, someone involved in criminal activities and convicted, an asylum seeker, a refugee.

Table 2. Six Ethical Guidelines for interviewing children. Source UNICEF, 2021

The Code of Ethics for Public Officers (2010) emphasizes on the standards for Public officers to have while in the Civil Service. The Public officer has the burden of responsibility, responsiveness, and effectiveness. The code of ethics is in line with existing legislations and rules and the code applies for those holding a permanent, part-time, working temporarily or on contracts under the Civil Service, the Local Government Service and the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, irrespective of their sex and hierarchy. The core values promulgated as ethical principles are integrity, selflessness, impartiality and objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and justice. Among the ethical conduct of an officer, harassment of colleagues, consumption of alcoholic drinks, gambling, discrimination, intimidation, violation of privacy, among some are severely reprimanded. The respect of the environment such as reducing use of paper, capitalization on use of IT such as bulk emails and saving energy, water and favouring recycling are encouraged.

III. METHODOLOGY

Descriptive research method and a case study approach were employed in this research paper. The why and what of Ethics were scrutinized from available literature and past research work in the field. Nassaji (2015) depicted that the objective of descriptive research is to describe a phenomenon and its characteristics. This paper described what is ethics and why it is important, how to maintain an ethical research conduct as well as the consequences of unethical conduct. The concept of ethics can be considered as a phenomenon. The case study approach was used in this research. Yin (1984:23) defined a case study as a method of investigating, a phenomenon within a real life context. Yin (1984) notes three categories, namely exploratory, descriptive and explanatory case studies. Exploratory case studies explore any phenomenon in the data which serves as a point of interest to the researcher. Descriptive case studies describe the natural phenomena which occur within the data in question, for instance, what different strategies are used by a reader and how the reader use them. Explanatory case studies examine the data closely both at a surface and deep level in order to explain the phenomena in the data. Yin (2009) stated that several different sources of data within each case or cases must be used and these data sources can include both primary and secondary data. Maxim (2014) mentioned ethical standards as the phenomenon of morality. The explanatory case study was employed in this research. The why and what of ethics was thoroughly investigated, why ethics exist and what is its purpose in research, why we need to abide to ethics and what ethics is made of.

IV. FINDINGS

Santelli et al (2017) from the UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, Florence explained that there need to be an ethical conduct while dealing with adolescents aged as from 10 years old since these categories of individuals are still in development stages. Research and Ethics committees have to take into consideration Ethics while taking decisions and they need to be protected. European Commission EC (2017) stated that the principles of European research ethics include respect for human dignity, utility, precaution, justice and moral principle. Kitchener (1984) discussed the five moral principles as being autonomy, justice, beneficence, nonmaleficence, and fidelity. Citing, Van Hoose and Paradise (1979) who did their research on Ethics and counselling, “a counselor (or any other researcherr) is probably acting in an ethically responsible way concerning a client (a respondent) if (1) he or she has maintained personal and professional honesty, coupled with (2) the best interests of the client, (3) without malice or personal gain, and (4) can justify his or her actions as the best judgment of what should be done based upon the current state of the profession” (p.58)

The Cambridge Handbook of Human Dignity Interdisciplinary Perspectives (Hill,2014) illustrated the work of Kant a German Philosopher whereby human dignity is referred to as every man, regardless of rank or social class, have an equal intrinsic worth or dignity and that Human dignity is an innate quality that was neither earned nor can anyone be deprived of. Oviedo, 4.IV.1997 European Treaty Series - No. 164, Council of Europe (1997) stated that, as per Article 1 – Purpose and object.

“Parties to this Convention shall protect the dignity and identity of all human beings and guarantee everyone, without discrimination, respect for their integrity and other rights and fundamental freedoms with regard to the application of biology and medicine. Each Party shall take in its internal law the necessary measures to give effect to the provisions of this Convention.” (Oviedo, 4.IV,1997).

World Medical Association WMA, (2018), at the Declaration of Helsinki Ethical principles article 20 affirms that the group should benefit from the knowledge, practices and outcomes of the research. Article 24 emphasises on taking precautions in protecting the privacy of the research subject and the confidentiality of their personal information.

Code of ethics is not limited to research only. Companies also have code of ethics within their organizations. Respect and fair treatment, care for people integrity, Care for the island and the planet, protection of assets, accountability to shareholders, avoiding any conflictual situation, customer focus, are some of the ethical concerns of the ENL Company of Mauritius (2018). ENL (2018) also preconize that when there is any

reasonable suspicion of any breach of ethics, the matter need to be reported unless the person acted in good faith and without any malicious intention as described by Kitchener (1984) and Van Hoose and Paradise (1979).

When ethical principles have been breached, there is a complaint and investigation. The suspect of the offence of breach of Ethics is informed of his breach with grounds supporting the accusations. If proven true without any reasonable suspicion, then a contract is torn down. Shrader-Frechette (1994:24) mentioned of the notion of an “implicit contract” between the public and the researcher. The Public supports the study , allowing the study and resources to be used so that the public at large is beneficial from the outcome of the research. When the research breaches this contract of trust, then this unethical practice tarnish the image of science (Anvari & Lakens, 2018) and the public no more have any confidence in the scientific world.

An example of a disastrous consequence of unethical practice leading to failure of trust is the example of the Havasupai Indian tribe (Mello & Wolf, 2010) . The Researchers had not obtained proper informed consent from the members of that tribe to collect blood sample and that led to a non-participation and mistrust towards medical research by any tribes (Van Assche, Gutwirth & Sterckx, 2013). Brown, Spiro & Quinton, (2020) favours for more rigorous ethical framework and incentives to be ethical.

Some researchers have remained engraved on the pages of scientific history due to the seriousness of their implications. Some of the most unethical researchers in science. Kennedy (2016) highlighted some of the most disturbing medical research studies. They were disturbing researchers because they were unethical and did not abide to any Human Rights conventions. Some Organizations such as the UNICEF, and EU established Articles and Code of Ethics because of these types atrocities committed in the name of research and science. Kennedy (2016) stated that doctors were injecting plutonium into the body of patients, including children to observe the effect of radiation. There were no consent in these researchers. The Tuskegee Syphilis Study on African-American males in Alabama was also described as very unethical. The patients were human rats who were lured to the research through advertisement, promising food and other facilities. The patients were not informed of the study and those who were ill were not given the treatment to cure them. The Tudor (1939) also referred to as the Monster Study is considered as one of the most unethical research done on children. The experiment involved using 22 orphans . During the research half of the subjects received positive speech therapy whereas the other half, received negative speech therapy and this resulted in normal children receiving a bad therapy suffering from psychological effects all their lives.

The NZAVS (2020) is a society with fundamental principles that people are misled by vivisection and in the name of science and medical field it is represents a fraud and a danger. In other words unethical. NZAVS (2020) argued that, for profits and for industrial use, holes like window shaped are drilled inside cows and they have to live with that their whole lives. It is known as the Fistulation surgery of the rumen. Newby et al. (2014) described in details the procedure of this type of experiment on animals. The Animal Care Committee, University of Guelph provided approval for the study. According to the Mirror (2019), the animal rights group L214 qualified this practice as inhumane and to ban these experiments.



Figure 2 Cow with a hole for research purposes . Source The Mirror Uk, 2019.

As justification, the University of Guelph (2022) Ethics and Regulatory Compliance affirms that while conducting research on animals the guiding principles of the 3Rs (replacement, reduction, refinement) are applied while experimenting on animals. It is said that the 3Rs serve as a steppingstone for researchers, educators and administrators to meet the standards of ethics while doing research in animals.

V. CONCLUSION

CBS Education (2021) refers to Indian Ethics is a branch of philosophy that deals with moral values. Ethical consideration has a deeper meaning than just a set of rules and codes. Ethics also known as *nītiśāstra* comes from the Greek *ethikos*, which means a set of moral principles. In Indian Culture there are some stories

which are known as Panchatantra Stories. Among these stories are the story of The Monkey and The Wedge (Tales of Panchatantra, 2021). The story goes by as a group of monkeys were watching some carpenters working. At a point, the workers left their work and went away. A monkey was curious and went to touch the work of these workers without their permission. What happened is that the monkey displaced a piece of wood and got stuck in between two heavy pieces of logs. The Panchatantra moral is that "One, who interferes in other's work, surely comes to grief"

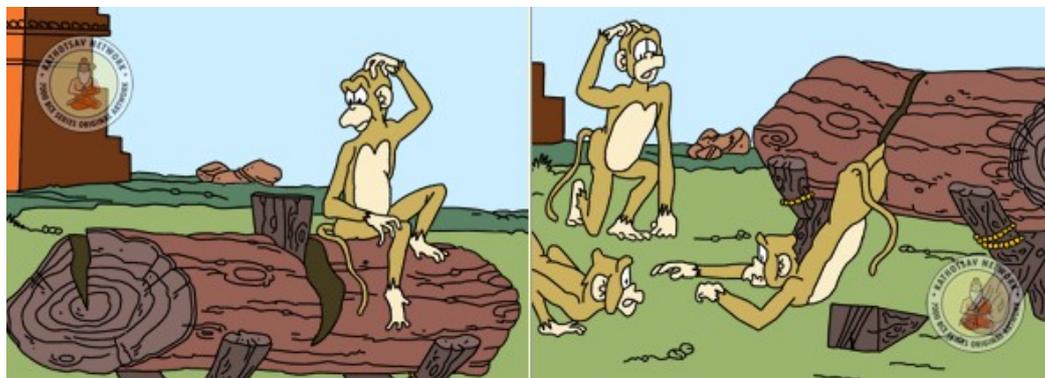


Figure 3 . The Monkey and The Wedge. Source , Tales of Panchatantra, 2021

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Yudhistir S.M.F. Jugessur . “An overview of the importance of Ethics in Educational Research as per International standards.” *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention (IJHSSI)*, vol. 11(04), 2022, pp 14-20. Journal DOI- 10.35629/7722