Ethical Concerns in Research Conduct

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ABSTRACT

The guiding principles of ethics help to protect the things we cherish (Johnson & Christenson, 2012). It is based on well-established moral principles that outline what is appropriate behavior for people to engage in, typically in terms of rights, duties, benefits to society, fairness, or certain qualities (Velasquez, Andre, Shanks, and Meyer, 1987). According to Webster's dictionary, the term "ethics" is derived from the French word "ethique" and was originally used in the 14th century to refer to a discipline that deals with moral obligations and the knowledge of good and bad. Ethics, which is also known as moral philosophy, considers the set of moral standards or principles that can be used to determine whether human behaviours are right or bad in each situation (Singer, 2021).

Keywords : Ethics, Education, Code of ethics, Educational Research

Ethics in Education Research- The development & implementation of every research study depend heavily on the ethical conduct of the research investigation. Even so, in the Indian context, research ethics is seen as one of the many topics that education researchers have neglected. The widespread belief that academics must "publish or perish" in order to advance their scholarly reputations may be to blame for the proliferation of shoddy research and its publication, which compromises ethical standards (Halder, n.d.). To avoid ethical problems that can occur when doing studies on human or non-human subjects, it is essential to grasp the principles protecting the rights of the subject being studied (Britannica, 2021).

According to Diener and Crandall (1978), ethical concerns are related to the professional problems that cause research misconduct. Research misconduct is "the fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, doing, or reviewing research or reporting research results," according to the U.S. Office of Science and Technology (Johnson & Christenson, 2012). If research is founded on false assertions, deceptive data, or fabricated findings, it is invalid because research is the discovery of truth or facts. The way in which research subjects are treated is another crucial ethical problem. Due diligence should be taken to uphold the requirements of performing an ethically sound research that does not harm the research participants physically, emotionally, or psychologically because the majority of studies use human beings.

The Ethics Code- The American Educational Research Association's (AERA, 1992) Ethical Standards

provided as a guide for the researchers in doing ethically acceptable research. The code, which was updated in 2011 as the Code of Ethics, acts as a procedure to specify the values and moral standards upheld in educational research. Several significant ethical norms and principles are considered as follows:

Guidelines for Research Ethics

1. Technical proficiency

A research project requires a high level of scholarly endeavours as well as intellectual and professional proficiency. In order to make the most use of the resources available, researchers should be aware of their intellectual capacity, domain competence, and experience before beginning any research project.

2. Integrity- A researcher is one who is reliable, honest, and honest. Objectives, data, and facts must be presented honestly as part of the study endeavour.

3. Professional, academic, and scientific accountability- One of the key components of educational research is accountability. The most important aspect of good scientific practice is respecting other researchers' differing opinions, work ethics, and theoretical and methodological approaches.

4. Respecting the Rights, Dignity, and Diversity of People- The researcher's personal bias or prejudice regarding the cultural, religious, geographic, gender, ethnic, caste, and socioeconomic conditions of the research participants should not be reflected in the reporting of the research findings. The researcher should also respect the rights and dignity of the research participants.

5. Responsibility for others- Every research project has the potential to be generalised to a certain culture or group; as a result, the primary duty of the researcher is to ensure that the findings produced do not endanger the feelings of the community or the study participants.

Ethical Principles- The ethical standards are the legally binding guidelines that educational researchers must follow in order to choose an ethical course of action. The following standards established by the AERA committee are discussed:

1. **Informational Consent-** The goals of the study, the risks involved, and any potential repercussions must be explained to the study's participants. Before inviting subjects to the study, a written or verbal consent should be obtained from them. Additionally, they must be kept up to date on any substantial changes to the scope, objectives, methods, risks, rewards, and confidentiality restrictions of research activities that might affect their decision to participate. Informed consent is the word used to describe consenting to take part in the study activity. A requirement for ethical research is to obtain written consent on a form from the participants, or from their legal guardians in the case of minor subjects. The

minor participant gives their consent after being informed of the details of the study activity and after the guardians have given their approval.

2. **Deception-** The confidence between the participants and the education researcher is not jeopardised by a secret purpose, a secret methodology, or inaccurate data reporting. Only when participants' willingness to offer accurate data is in a compromised state is deception used. After the study, the deception should be minimized, and the participants should be told of the hidden truth. Data can then be acquired from the participants based on partial truth. This is accomplished by holding a debriefing session after the study is over, during which all of the study's components and the reasons for deception are explained to the participants (Philips, 1994). The goal is to regain the participants', students', and clients' confidence in the study process.

3. **Ability to Withdraw-** The participants are completely free to leave the research at any moment. The participants or clients should be notified at the commencement of the research study that they can simply discontinue the study at any time if they do not feel comfortable during the research procedures or the study tends to focus on their emotional or psychological states.

4. **Security measure Mental and physical harm-** There may be some difficulties that the research participant finds upsetting. Questioning people about such delicate subjects can jeopardize their emotional and mental health, and certain studies might even be harmful to their physical health. When such unintended outcomes arise, the proper corrective actions are made to lessen the harm.

5. **Privacy, Anonymity, and Confidentiality-** Each participant is entitled to privacy. They must be guaranteed of the anonymity, secrecy, and privacy of the data because obtaining any information or data could put them in danger. It is not acceptable to use the data gathered for unauthorized or dishonest research. It is wise to use any confidential information that you obtain from study participants, students, clients, or coworkers. The participants should be made aware of the protection's restrictions and any applicable laws. Information that could be used to identify the source or research participant should not be disclosed in research reports.

6. **Non-discrimination-** The ethical code strongly condemns discrimination of any type, whether it is based on gender, age, caste, creed, religion, region, marital status, socioeconomic status, or sexual orientation, among research subjects.

7. **Harassment-** Cooperation with research subjects, students, coworkers, or employees is made possible by non-discriminatory behavior. It is unethical to harass research participants in order to coerce data from them or to get sensitive information from them for the research study's advantage. It is acceptable

to use but not to exploit the knowledge, information, resources, and sources of coworkers, students, supervisors, and awarding agencies.

8. Non-exploitation- Abusing research subjects, students, coworkers, or anybody else is considered to be exploitation and is done to advance one's own professional, economic, or personal interests. It is forbidden to directly or indirectly take advantage of people's interpersonal relationships in education research.

9. Credit for Authorship- The writers whose thoughts or studies were used in the research activity should be given due credit. It is forbidden for educational researchers to misrepresent, fabricate, or falsify authorship. According to each author's contribution to the study's field, the order of authorship, such as primary author and secondary author, should be determined. When producing a research paper, it is unethical to use the contributions of other authors without giving them proper credit. This immoral behavior is known as plagiarism. It happens when one author steals an idea, a piece of writing, or even a minor detail from another author without giving that person credit. To avoid the moral dilemma of intellectual theft, the work of someone else's work used should be properly acknowledged and referenced in the study report. By paraphrasing the phrases, statements, or definitions offered by others and referencing the author, source, and page number, plagiarism can be avoided. Additionally, it is considered "self-plagiarism" when an author submits a piece of writing from a previous publication as new or original work in a subsequent publication. Therefore, it is necessary to cite the original source of one's own prior work in the new study plan.

10. Ownership of ideas- The only owner of the work education researchers generate or to which they make a contribution to the field of study is themselves. Intellectual property includes copyrights, patents, and trademarks; it is owned and guarded by the owner. It is necessary to obtain authorization before using someone else's intellectual property, and the owner must be properly credited.

Ethics in e-research- The research method has undergone a paradigm shift in the modern period. The majority of the data used in research projects is acquired through electronic channels. Internet usage as a means of gathering data from participants from various populations, acquiring a pool of review studies, and creating an understanding of the research study is growing. It is simple to access and use all of the researchers' published work as well as the global literature that is available. Many researchers welcome the convenience, affordability, and economics of conducting research online. The scientific community's potential violations of ethical standards could become a concern as a result, though. The research subjects are frequently threatened with deceit, harassment, invasion of privacy, confidentiality violations, and numerous other ethical problems.

In this context, in its most recent publication, Internet Research Ethics 3.0, the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) ethics working committee provided rules in 2019. The rules for research communities using the internet were developed by the AoIR. The Internet Research Ethics (IRE, 2019)

sheds light on the moral dilemmas that present themselves during the research process as well as the difficulty in obtaining informed permission for qualitative research investigations. An vital and necessary component of performing an ethical research study is obtaining informed consent from the research subjects at the outset. Their autonomy in participation is reflected in their willingness to participate and disclose their data while respecting their rights to privacy, secrecy, anonymity, and withdrawal. Nevertheless, it can be difficult to win over participants' trust when conducting research studies online. The participants should be informed and thoroughly briefed about the goals, purpose, steps, risks, and negative effects via phone calls or emails. Online consent forms can be given to participants, requesting that they comprehend the study's goals and methodology.

In electronic researches, cases of privacy invasion or confidentiality violation are often documented. During transmission and storage, the data gathered online is vulnerable to data theft. The hackers violate the participants' privacy by hacking, encrypting, and using the transferred data for their own purposes. This is another major reason why many participants decline to take part in online surveys and research projects. The privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity of participants as well as the study data are at danger since every step of the data lifecycle—from collection to storage and dissemination—is threatened by theft or exploitation by outside parties.

E-research participants are also susceptible to fraud. They are unaware of the proposed study's secret goal or any significant adjustments made to the study's design in order to meet the stated goals. Debriefing the participants after the study is over is thus important for an e-research to be ethically sound. The online participants should be invited to an interactive debriefing session where they will learn about the necessity and use of deceit. Sending a debriefing form to each participant's email address is recommended. The participants in e-research should also have the option to leave the research study at any time. The ability to readily leave the study should be provided to research participants in case they do not feel comfortable continuing the further course of the investigation. This will keep them safe from damage. Participants should be given the option to "exit the study" on the electronic form that is supplied to them, allowing them to do so at any moment.

Researchers whose identities and research findings are also under danger are also protected by the Internet Research Ethics (2019). Working online makes the researcher's identity—both personal and professional—public. The research information and conclusions that are published are often accessible. The researchers may encounter significant ideological reactions from the society or the intended audience when study reports released regarding sensitive themes are made public. The public identity (e.g., ethnicity, minority identity, sexual identity, political interest, etc.) "prompts tough ideological reactions ranging from death threats, doxxing (publishing private information about the researchers in order to fan the flames of further hate speech, threat, etc.)," according to Massanari (2016).

Conclusion- Research is defined fundamentally as an original or novel investigation of knowledge or as the use of an already-existing source of knowledge to explore novel concepts or ideas. The values directing and safeguarding their commitment towards the research community and to society at large should be emphasized by education researchers since their work represents a fresh discovery or exploration of ideas, facts, or concepts. Their commitment to academic integrity should never be compromised for the sake of convenience. When conducting a research study, the principles and norms of ethical research should be kept in mind in order to protect the academic community from the harms of unethical activity. The work that education researchers do or generate should have the potential to serve society, be acceptable to them, and not conflict with their ideas, social norms, or moral convictions. In order to gain the public's trust in the research community, the ethics committee's code of conduct for conducting research is absolutely essential. To avoid getting caught up in legal disputes, education researchers should abide by the guidelines established by the ethics committee. When educational researchers are accused of a crime and must defend themselves in court, understanding of the ethics code aids and prevents this. "Ethically-informed research procedures grow out of processes of deliberation and decision making under tremendous ambiguity, which often may go wrong or appear compel us towards less-ideal solutions," Zimmer and Kinder-Kurlanda (2017) wrote (p. 303). While there may not always be apparent, simple, or ideal solutions to the ethical problems that internet researchers encounter, IRE 3.0 offers researchers an improved framework to engage in the crucial "processes of deliberation" that will enable ethically responsible research practices (IRE, 2019).

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