

Significance of Ethics in Educational Research: A Prominent Feature

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Abstract

Ethics is the branch of philosophy which deals with the dynamics of decision making concerning what is right or wrong. Ethics relate to the manner in which a researcher treats participants in the research study. The purpose of this paper is to discuss and explain the significance of ethics is in educational research. Ethics refers to a system of principles which can vitally change previous contemplation about choices and actions. To maintain ethical considerations the researcher needs to discuss on the certain elements like as – 1.Planning a research, 2. Safe guarding collected information, 3. Responsibility of protecting the respondents,

4. Maintaining privacy and Confidentiality, 5. Guidelines and avoid plagiarism.

There are a number of ethical principles that should be taken into account when the researcher performing any research. At the core, these ethical principles stress the need to (a) do good (known as beneficence) and (b) do no harm (known as non-malignance). In practice, these ethical principles mean that as a researcher, you need to: (a) obtain informed consent from potential research

participants, (b) minimize the risk of harm to participants, (c) protect their anonymity and confidentiality, (d) avoid using deceptive practices, and (e) give participants the right to withdraw from your research. This paper also discuss these five ethical principles and their practical implications for enhance the meaning of ethics in Educational research.

Keywords: Research Ethics, Plagiarism, Anonymity, Maintaining Confidentiality and Privacy.

Introduction

Increasing pressure to publish, deficient training in ethical scientific writing, ignorance, oversight and lack of statutory controls and clear policies to deal with scientific misconduct in academics has led to the rise of research misconducts which can severely impact growth of India's higher education system. The last two decades witnessed a surge of ranking and rating initiatives in Higher Education, which were limited to the domain of business and industry. When came into educational prospects it has shifted our focus from aspect work to quantitative measures. To get a higher position in the university rankings numerous papers are being published without even checking the aspect of the content. The system of education of country has taken a move towards the commercialization of education, leaving the generous path of transmission and inculcation of knowledge among the pupils. Even the government policies are ambiguous about the publications. For getting high API score people are taking some unethical ways by using the unauthorized and improper means that has contributed in the degradation of aspect research in the country. As per the article published on **May 28, 2017** by [Press Trust of India](#) , **New Delhi** ,“All the central universities in [India](#) put together have a lesser research output than either of the world's top two ranking varsities - Cambridge and Stanford,

according to a latest study that paints a dismal picture of the state of scientific research in the country.”

Ethics is rooted in the ancient Greek philosophical inquiry of ethical life. It refers to a system of principles which can critically change previous considerations about choices and actions. Ethics deals with the dynamics of decision making concerning what is right and wrong. Research ethics provides guidelines for the responsible conduct of research. In addition, it educates and monitors scientists conducting research to ensure a high ethical standard, but when ignored it affects the aspect of research in adverse ways. We are facing some ethical issues in research that has lead to the poor research work and degraded the aspect of researches in our Country. As published in **[Press Trust of India, Toronto](#)** on **September 7, 2017** “India is the top country globally to get low-aspect [research](#) published in 'predatory' journals, according to a study which found that it contributed 27 per cent of the scientific studies in bogus publications.”India has witnessed several Plagiarism, made by top academia have also been reported in **The Education Times** dated **3rd April 2018** and **The Hindustan Times** dated **4th April 2018**.

Why is Research Ethics Essential?

- It is a reflection of respect for those who 'take part' in research.
- It ensures no unreasonable, unsafe or thoughtless demands are made by researchers.
- It ensures sufficient knowledge is shared by all concerned.
- It imposes a common standard in all the above respects.
- It has become the norm as an expectation for research activities.

Primary Ethical Principles



Beneficence

- a. Imposes duty on researchers to minimise harm and to maximize benefits.
- b. The right to protect from harm and discomfort.
- c. Freedom from exploitation.
- d. Benefits from research.



Respect for human dignity

- ! The right to self determination- humans should be treated as autonomous agents, capable of controlling their own activities.
- ! The right to full disclosure of nature of study, responsibilities, risks, benefits etc.



Justice

- ! The right to fair treatment
- ! The right to privacy

Major ethical issues in conducting research

Informed consent

Informed consent is the major ethical issue in conducting research. According to Armiger "it means that a person knowingly, voluntarily and intelligently, and in a clear and manifest way, gives his consent". Informed consent protects person's right to autonomy. It strives for incorporating the rights of sovereign individuals through self-resolution. It prevents the integrity of the individual, personal freedom and fidelity. Of course individuals can make informed decisions in order to participate in research voluntarily only if they have been intimated with the attainable risks and utility of the research. Free and informed consent needs to incorporate an introduction to the study and its purpose as well as an explanation about the selection of the research subjects and the procedures that will be followed. It is essential to describe any physical harm or discomfort, any invasion of privacy and any threat to dignity as well as how the subjects will be compensated in that case. In addition the subjects need to know any expected benefits either to the subject or to science by gaining new knowledge. A disclosure of alternatives is also required. The researcher must inform the subjects about the methods which will be used to protect anonymity and confidentiality and indicate a person with whom they can discuss the study. The researcher must also take into account that persons with physical, cultural and emotional barriers may require a very simple language in order to understand him. This is very important but raises the issue of how difficult the subjects can withdraw after developing a personal and sometimes friendly relationship with researcher. With regard to withdrawal a researcher may be in a dilemma in case many subjects choose to withdraw at an advanced stage of the study, because this can affect the validity of the results. The Declaration of Helsinki provides some help as it declares that the interest of the subject must always prevail over the

interests of society and science. According to this, the will of the subject must be respected at any cost for the research.

Another major ethical issue is obtaining an informed consent from groups with diminished autonomy which will be further discussed later. From what has been discussed, it becomes clear that disclosure, comprehension, competency and voluntariness are the four essential parts of consent.

Beneficence- Do not harm

The ethical principle of beneficence refers to the Hippocratic "be of benefit, not harm". Beauchamp and Childress, suggest that *"the principle of beneficence includes the professional mandate to do effective and significant research to better serve and promote the welfare of our constituents"*. At the time of formulating the hypothesis in qualitative research, Beneficence is sometimes tough to forecast. Research findings state that it was not that much up to the mark, this can raise immense ethical considerations especially for researchers. According to Burns and Grove "discomfort and harm can be physiological, emotional, social and economic in nature".

If a researcher tries to imbibe some secretive descriptions of the participant's lives that means he is pouring salts over their wounds. A researcher must keep in mind all possibilities related to the research and tries to balance the harm's risks with proportionate advantages. The kind, degree, and the number of probable harms must be assessed. The disadvantage-advantage ratio can only be gained by considering these factors. If the risks overpower the benefits, the study should be reviewed.

At the end of a study, debriefing should be mentioned. Debriefing means to elaborate on the exact objective of the research and also explains why the disclosure was not complete. In

research, the participants should be much more comfortable to express their feelings. Besides, if they are not comfortable, they must be debriefed professional guidance as per need.

Respect for anonymity and confidentiality

The issue of confidentiality and anonymity is intimately connected with the rights of beneficence, respect for the dignity and fidelity. Anonymity is protected when the participants' identity cannot be connected with personal responses. If the researcher is not able to promise anonymity he has to address confidentiality, which is the management of personal information by the researcher to protect the subject's identity. Confidentiality means that individuals are free to give and withhold as much information as they wish to the person they choose. The researcher is responsible for "maintain the confidentiality that goes beyond ordinary loyalty". Clarke addresses the ethical dilemma of the researcher when confidentiality must be broken because of the moral duty to protect society.

According to the utilitarian theory, which focuses on the best interest of all involved, the happiness of society is of greater importance. On the other hand, the deontological theory which ignores the results implies that moral duty is what matters. If a researcher, though, acts

deontological, he may feel that he has not protected society. Another issue is that the researcher may have to report secret information to courts which can also result in moral ambiguities. In some cases, it is stated that the moral duty and personal dispositions can have a stronger impact than lawful need. Even if there are no role conflicts, the researcher encounters numerous issues concerning pertaining secrecy especially in qualitative research where conduct is personal, the sample.

The researchers must be attentive to all psychological and social issues that a breach of confidentiality may have on participants. To protect their privacy, they must have informed about their rights and all coding systems that they think appropriate in each case.

Respect for privacy

Information privacy is considered an important aspect of information sharing. With the advancement of the digital age, personal knowledge vulnerabilities have increased. According to Levine "Privacy is the freedom an individual has to determine the time, extent, and general circumstances under which private information will be shared with or withheld from others".

These days' people are mostly satiate in invading privacy. Invasion of privacy is the intrusion into the personal life of another, which can give the person whose privacy has been invaded a right to bring a lawsuit for damages against the person or entity that intruded. Kelman believes that a breach of privacy occurs when personal information such as ideas, outlook, opinions, and data is shared with others without the author's knowledge or consent. It encompasses workplace monitoring; Internet privacy, data collection, and other means of advertise private information. A researcher cannot pick the information of other persons without their knowledge of those delicate issues. All

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aims, instruments, and methodology must be discussed with the prospective subject and the research workers before the investigation.

Privacy can be invaded when researchers study certain groups without their knowledge and without identifying themselves. Researchers must be aware that "an invasion of privacy may cause loss of dignity, friendship or employment, or create feelings of anxiety, guilt, embarrassment or shame". All possible measures have to be taken to protect subjects from potential physical, psychological or social damage during the research or after the circulation of the results.

All the above-discussed aspects indicate that it is a really serious issue which is not only degrading the aspect of research but also is playing with the reputation of our country. While on one side we are developing in many areas of life, on the other hand, these kinds of misconducts pulling us back again trench of darkness which is like a black spot on our dignity. When we think of this serious concern again and again some questions hit the researchers mind that as-

- ! Who is responsible for the decline in the standards and aspect of research?
- ! Who is ready to take the responsibility?
- ! The NAAC will only limit itself for the accreditations of institutions or will contribute to the research sector too?
- ! What are the plans of NCTE to check these misconducts?
- ! What measures will be set for maintaining the aspect of research in India?
- ! What kind of actions will be taken against the agencies involved in the research malpractices?
- ! Aren't there any other measures except the punishment to check the wrong achievers?

Ethical issues, conflicting values and ambiguity in decision making are recurrently emerging from a literature review on the research because of a shortage of clarity in ethical standards; researchers must promote an awareness of these issues and an effective framework to deal with

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issues involving human rights. This is necessary to come into terms with the issue of the researcher's values relative to the individual's rights versus the interests of society. Professional codes, laws, regulations and ethics panel can provide some guidance but the final determinant of how research is performed rests with the researcher's value system and moral code. To prepare future educators, ethics in research must receive special consideration in teacher education educational program. The criticism and uncertainties that occur should be rather encouraged than conceal in education.

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