Research Ethics - A focus on Plagiarism

Research Methodology Training Postgraduate Students, Tshwane University of Technology,

Presented by Prof Khumbulani Mpofu

REC Faculty Representative: TUT Research Ethics Committee - 2013 to 2016

www.tut.ac.za
‘IT IS REQUIRED IN STEWARDS THAT A MAN BE FOUND FAITHFUL.’

http://i.static-locatetv.com/images/content/4/561463_head_games.jpg (10 Nov 2012)
Plagiarism is presenting someone else’s work or ideas as your own, with or without their consent, by incorporating it into your work without full acknowledgement.

All published and unpublished material, whether in manuscript, printed or electronic form, is covered under this definition.

Plagiarism may be intentional or reckless, or unintentional.

https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/plagiarism?wssl=1
Plagiarism

- Plagiarize (and plagiarism) comes from the Latin plagiarus “kidnapper.”
- This word, derived from the Latin plaga (“a net used by hunters to catch game”), extended its meaning in Latin to include a person who stole the words, rather than the children, of another.
- When plagiarius first entered English in the form plagiary, it kept its original reference to kidnapping, a sense that is now quite obsolete.

https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/plagiarize
“Research is finding out the things that we don’t know, while Ethics is doing it in a way that does not hurt anyone”

Ann Robertson
University of Toronto
“Ethics refers to norms for conduct that distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour”

David Resnik

RESNIK D.B. What is ethics in research & Why is it important? http://www.niehs.nih.gov/research/resources/bioethics/whatis.cfm
ETHICS IS TO ...

- responsibly attempt to figure out right vs wrong, virtuous vs vicious
- take a pause to reason, not merely check a list of have-to-do's

A right is a legitimate claim that is independent of cultural preferences (i.e. universal)

Principle: Applies equally to all by virtue of one’s status as a human being; everyone has it

Individual rights trump Social utility → Primacy of human person → Avoid abusive decisions

HUMAN RIGHTS

- **Function**: To provide a framework which enables people to choose (determine) the course of their own lives → *Self-responsibility*

- **Autonomy** (self-determination) vs *Paternalism* (“expert” knows what is “good” for others)
HUMAN DIGNITY

Immanuel Kant
➢ Principle: Treat humans as an end, not as a means/object to an end (categorical imperative)
➢ A fundamental principle of bioethics & human rights
➢ Inherent inviolable right

HUMAN DIGNITY

➢ Refers to inherent “human worth” regardless of age, sex, social status, achievement, ethnic origin
  ▪ Respect for diversity
  ▪ Avoid discrimination and acts of humiliation
➢ Cannot be gained or lost, you have it

http://ec.europa.eu/justice/fundamental-rights/media/photos/frcrowd.jpg (7 Sep 2012)
HUMAN DIGNITY

- Ethics principle: The interests & welfare of the individual should have priority over the sole interest of science or society → Not be reduced to instruments (objects, subjects) of research
- Science is not an end in itself but a means to serve individuals and society → Attitude of “privilege”
Duty/Obligation: Responsibility to adhere to values in a specific context; to follow certain rules of conduct
HUMAN DIGNITY

➢ Two research obligations:
  ▪ Duty to avoid harm (non-maleficence) – Exploitation, Abuse, Unwarranted risks
  ▪ Duty to do good (beneficence)
    ➢ Respect & Benefits
    ➢ Protection of wellness, rights & socio-cultural diversity

http://2.bp.blogspot.com/--trxV43QPtM/Tp6vBEF7-XI/AAAAAAAAABeM/1JkfIvfyzEg/s1600/respect+1.png (7 Sep 2012)
Two research obligations:

- Summary: “Dignity is a minimum threshold of research conduct”
BENEFITS & HARMs

- **Ethics principle**: Direct and indirect benefits to participants should be *maximised* & possible harm / risks should be *minimised*
- Research is always risky

http://www.teknat.umu.se/digitalAssets/25/25328_risk_webb.jpg
(11 Nov 2012)
BENEFITS

- Beneficence = Obligation to advance the interests of participants or society
- Direct benefits: Material, health, psychological, information
- Societal benefits: Knowledge, economic, public health
- Tendency to overestimate

Aim: To induce participation

BUT, incentives should not undermine autonomy (i.e. coercion or undue inducement vs Fair and reasonable incentive)

Monetary; Tangible items
Fair compensation (travel)
Gift of appreciation

http://www.interlink.org.nz/gifs/money.gif
Non-maleficence = Moral obligation to not inflict harm
Harms = Potential of injuring a participant or society/community
Tendency to underestimate risks; most risks accrue to participants
Self-test: “Would YOU accept the harms / risks?”
HARMS & RISKS

- Physical harm
- Psychological harm: Regret
- Moral harm: Unfairness, disrespect
- Social harm: Stigmatisation
- Economic harm: Income, employment

http://ospitiweb.indire.it/adi/DiffApprendimento/immagini/DiffA_3b.jpg
Moral sanction for exposure to risks is the intended benefit \[ \rightarrow \] Research must have favorable benefit-harm ratio \[ \rightarrow \] Max benefit & Min harm/risks

http://www.rfi.fr/actuvi/images/111/balancejusticetribunal200.jpg
AUTONOMY

- Ethics principle: Recognition of the human capacity to:
  - Hold viewpoints
  - Make authentic decisions (wrong)
  - Take actions based on personal values and beliefs
  - Take responsibility for it

- Autonomy (Person-centred) vs Paternalism (Researcher-centred)

http://1stchoiceam.com/resources/_wsb_514x414_Direction.jpg
Application in research contexts:
- Subject vs Participant
- Informed Consent
- Voluntary participation: Free from coercion & deception; Withdrawal at any time
AUTONOMY

- Privacy: Free from interference from others (personal info, thoughts, opinions, personal communication with others)
- Confidentiality: Responsibility to protect personal information from unauthorised access, disclosure, use, loss or theft
RESTRICTED AUTONOMY

- Children, cognitively impaired, mental illness
- *Proxy judgment*, but respect dignity through involvement
- Individual vs Communal autonomy (Cultural knowledge / treasures)
- Not an absolute right; limited to non-infringement of others’ rights
INFORMED CONSENT

- “Informed Consent is an expression of respect for autonomy, dignity & privacy”
- Interactive consent process:
  1. Disclosure of information
  2. Capacity to understand info
  3. Ensure voluntariness of decision
  4. Formal consent
1. **Adequate information**: Jargon, Language, Deception, Research info (aims, methods, duration, risks, benefits), Conflict of interest

2. **Capacity to understand**: Age; Mental /cognitive ability; Comprehension (literacy/reading level, risks, harms); Ethics awareness training prior to consent

3. Voluntary (Free): Coercion (undue influence), Deception, Withdrawal, No disadvantage, Asymmetrical power issues, Incentives

Collective/cultural consent by a leader? Respect for cultural diversity (authority structures) & cultural knowledge (rituals, genome); should not limit individual autonomy

4. **Formal consent process:**

- Time to reflect on information
- Prior vs Retrospective consent
- Explicit/Express (written, oral, gesture) vs Implied consent
- First person vs Proxy (children)
- Specific vs Blank consent
- Consent waiver – Archive records; anonymous; traceable?

http://www.voyagesphotosmanu.com/Complet/images/Mangosuthu_Buthelezi.jpg
“In applying ... medical practice and associated technologies, human vulnerability should be taken into account ... individuals and groups of special vulnerability should be protected and personal integrity ... respected”
HUMAN VULNERABILITY ...

- Latin vulnus: Susceptibility of being wounded / touched = Human fragility & finitude
- Godfrey Tangwa (Cameroon): Risk to be harmed, exploited, deceived or unfairly treated

HUMAN VULNERABILITY

- Threats to dignity / integrity (human fragility) that requires recognition & non-exploitation
- *Un-freedom* to exercise autonomy

VIEWS OF “VULNERABILITY”

- Emmanuel Levinas (1972): “… when self always comes after otherness … self is already in relation to the other, who waits for him/her, who makes him/her”

- Hans Jonas (1979): “… a perishable characteristic of what exists”

http://static4.businessinsider.com/image/4ed7e95feab8ea443d000011-590-440-400/-shadow-1.jpg (20 Feb 2013)
VULNERABILITY

- **Social marginalisation**: Very sick, elderly, xenophobia, illiteracy, immigrants, sexuality
- **Socio-economic context**: Poverty, unemployment, homelessness
- **Power imbalances**: Student-lecturer, employee-employer

http://knowledge.allianz.com/nopi_downloads/images/poverty_homeless_feet_z_2.jpg
Vulnerability can not be fully eliminated → “Ethics of care”

Obligation/responsibility on researchers:

- Recognise fragility / finitude of participants → Awareness that vulnerable others are subject to diverse forms of “wounding” → Consider alternative options
HUMAN VULNERABILITY

“Ethics of care” obligation on researchers:

➢ Not add “wounds” in our dealings with participants
➢ To let self step out of other’s shadow
➢ Be ethical mentors & role models

PERSONAL INTEGRITY

- Latin tangere:
  - Being “untouched”, that which is unaltered/uncorrupted
  - State of integration in the private sphere of life

http://www.christysclipart.com/integrity_torch1.GIF (6 Sep 2012)
PERSONAL INTEGRITY

Merleau-Ponty (1945):

- Multidimensionality of humans → Physical, mental, social, cognitive & spiritual dimensions forms an inseparable unity
- Participants are not merely a “source of data” but an integrated “lived body”
To recognise, acknowledge & respect the personal coherence in someone else’s multiple dimensions → Motivates researchers to strive towards keeping participants “untouched”

INTEGRITY

- **Definition**: Virtue of being faithful to moral values & Standing up in their defense when they are threatened

- **Why do we need integrity?**
  - Being *trustworthy* (Society & colleagues)
  - Being morally accountable for knowledge, skills and conduct

http://www.christysclipart.com/integrity_torch1.GIF (6 Sep 2012)
Lack of Integrity → Exploitation, Negligence, Sub-optimal care, Abuse, Objectification, Sloppiness, Doubtful contribution to body of knowledge → Participants and/or society are wounded
Adapted from: Prof W Landman, “Governing and managing ethics in the university”, Presentation at TUT, 21 May 2012.

## INTEGRITY GROWTH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survival</th>
<th>Reactive Ethics</th>
<th>Compliance</th>
<th>Integrity</th>
<th>Ethical Society</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bread first, morals later</td>
<td>Mere awareness of ethical “rules”</td>
<td>“Cold adherence” to norms and checklists</td>
<td>Internalised personal ethical behaviour &amp; Benevolence</td>
<td>Ethics entrenched in the “way we all live and work”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unethical practices endorsed</td>
<td>Ethical standards, but no enforcement</td>
<td>Rules and external enforcement</td>
<td>Values, virtues and internal commitment</td>
<td>Unethical practices regarded as “stupid”</td>
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Some things in life are morally more important than research endeavors, namely human dignity and respect for individual autonomy.
“Moral responsibility increases in proportion to knowledge”

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS


REFERENCES


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▪ Milgram Experiment (Derren Brown) (Running time - 10:48 minutes). Available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y6GxluljT3w
REFERENCES

- Privacy and Confidentiality in Human Subject Research (Running time - 5:15 minutes). Available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DPOxvNbVwKk&feature=relmfu


- Pfizer & Trovan I (Running time - 1:26) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4EjNxBP9Ssg&feature=related

- Pfizer & Trovan II (Running time - 3:06) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9PDE9G0ahU4
Diversity makes the world colorful. Available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7cgbewUnGFQ&play next=1&list=PL2CA61ADAB81A5072&feature=results_video
https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/plagiarism?wssl=1 accessed 26 April 2020.
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www.tut.ac.za

E-mail: mpolofuk@tut.ac.za
Tel (W): (012) 382-5571