3ᴿᴰ ANNUAL EMERGING AND EARLY CAREER AFRICAN SCHOLARS RESEARCH TRAINING ACADEMY

5 September 2022
Research Ethics
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Learning objective

At the end of this module, you should be able to:

- Understand what research ethics is

- Understand why it is important and necessary

- Operationalize research ethics practices and principles in academic research

Presentation outline

- What is ethics in research conduct?
- Why is research ethics important?
- Fundamental research ethics principles
- Norms for determining ethically sound research conduct
- Research ethics practices during the Covid-19 pandemic
- Academic research ethics clearance process
- Questions, comments and clarifications

What is ethics in research conduct?

- The set of values, standards, and principles used to determine appropriate and acceptable conduct at all stages of the research process

- Principles for guiding decision-making and reconciling conflicting values in research with people & about people

- Concerns the responsibility of researchers to be honest and respectful to all individuals who may be affected by their research activities or research outputs/reports

Why is research ethics important?

- It is a reflection of respect for those who take part in research

- It ensures that no unreasonable, unsafe, or thoughtless demands are made by researchers

- It ensures that research outputs are shared in a responsible and ethically sound manner

- It imposes a common standard on all the above respects

- An ethically insensitive researcher can leave the research setting in disarray viz:
  - ❖ future research endeavors
  - ❖ their institution

Fundamental principles - The Belmont Report (1979)

Compiled by USA's National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research

Applying the Principles of the Belmont Report

Principle	Meaning	Practice
Respect for Persons	Each person has individual rights	Obtain informed consent, protect privacy, maintain confidentiality, take note of vulnerable groups needing special protection
Beneficence	Protect from harm, limit risk	Risk-benefit assessment made Standard Procedures to be used
Justice	Equitable selection of subjects	Includes all groups that may benefit but does not single out one group

Norms for determining ethically sound research conduct

Valid research design – taking into account relevant theory & methods

Competence of researcher – capable to carry out research procedures and ensuring that proper training was attained (Training & Resources In Research Ethics Evaluation (TRREEE) Certificate)

Identification of consequences – assessment of risks and benefits (maximizing benefit and minimizing risk)

Voluntary informed consent – obtained before study begins, without undue threat or inducement, with enough information, and agreement to participate

Selection of research participants – appropriate to the purposes of the study, representative of the population that will benefit from the research and appropriate in number

Responsibility for what happens to research participants

Research ethics practices during the Covid-19 pandemic 1.

- Studies should comply with the disaster emergency laws, rules, and guidelines of the country where the research is conducted

- Researchers should adhere to all preventive measures as advised by the World Health Organization

- Research activities should NOT be undertaken if they impede emergency responses

- Research design should have clear protocols of risk assessment and mitigation strategies to ensure protection from risk of infection and to mitigate other health risks, including potential mental health impacts on research participants and researchers

Research ethics practices during the Covid-19 pandemic 2.

- During COVID-19 pandemic, remote interaction and conducting online or internet-based research have assumed centre stage for most research designs. These presented specific ethical concerns regarding privacy, transparency, confidentiality, and data security

- Specific measures and extra effort must therefore be taken to:
  - ❖ ensure transparency during recruitment;
  - ❖ take necessary steps for data security and ensure that data are not used for subsequent non-research purposes.
  - ❖ offer participants the opportunity to modify their data;
  - ❖ offer participants the opportunity to withdraw from the research and retract their data;
  - ❖ obtain informed and knowledgeable consent and ensure that consent is obtained on an ongoing basis;
  - ❖ use secure communication protocols and platforms;
  - ❖ consider the expectations of participants about privacy

Academic research ethics clearance process – FAQs 1.

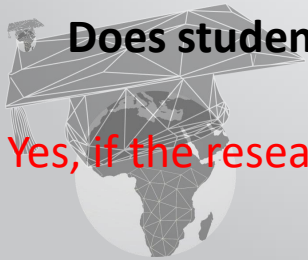**Who conducts academic research ethics clearance?**

Research ethics clearance typically involves AN ETHICS CLEARANCE COMMITTEE (which normally, should be composed of people of different backgrounds) looking at the research aims and methodologies of researchers to make sure that the research will be conducted in a way that protects the dignity, rights and safety of the research participants, and that the research design is ethically sound and is likely to render the anticipated results

Must all research/studies be subjected to ethics clearance; any exemptions?

When there are no human participants, or when the review and analysis is purely of information freely available in the public domain (e.g., newspaper reports, meta-analysis of published work, etc.) then research is normally exempt from ethics clearance

Does student academic research require research ethics approval?

Yes, if the research involves human participants.

Academic research ethics clearance process – FAQs 2.

What is the usual duration/period that a research is granted ethics clearance?

In most cases, clearance is granted for a maximum of 12 months (from date of approval). If the research is especially sensitive or has the potential to harm, the REC may grant clearance for a shorter period and request reports after e.g. three or six months before being granting clearance for a longer period

Under what circumstances is an application for research ethics clearance rejected?

Most RECs do their best to turn applications around as fast as possible. Only rarely is a proposal rejected. In general, queries or requests for substantive detail arise when (a) an application is incomplete and/or (b) when the researcher has not demonstrated that he or she has considered the ethical implications of the chosen methodology or procedures or particular population

Can REC ethics approval be shared with colleagues working on similar projects?

No. Approval is specific to particular research and researchers.

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS

CLARIFICTIONS ?

Menti Poll
www.menti.com - 7658494

Tea and Stretch Break
Until 14:45

British Educational Research Association – case studies

- 1. Twitter, data collection and informed consent
- 2. Researcher wellbeing and international fieldwork
- 3. Anticipating the application & unintended consequences of practitioner research

Required tasks:

- **Read the case study assigned to your group (10 minutes)**
- **Discuss the case study and the main ethical issues raised. Please refer to the questions listed at the end of the document. (20 minutes)**
- **If there is time remaining, please discuss whether you can relate to the ethical challenge and whether something similar has happened to you in the past?**

Thank you