Research Methods for Business and Management

Session 11- Ethics in Research

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Defining Ethics in Research

• Ethical concern will emerge as you carry out your research from planning, proposal, data collection and analysis and reporting results

• **Ethics is about actions that are valid in all circumstances**

• Your work will have an ethic attached to it that says something about you and your attitude

• Your ethical standpoint could **bias** the work in unexpected ways and **make it invalid**
Formal Definition

• “Ethics refers to the appropriateness of your behaviour in relation to the rights of those who become the subject of your work or who are affected by it”

• “Ethics are norms or standards of behavior that guide moral choices about our behavior and our relationships with others”
  Cooper and Schindler (2006, pg. 116)
Points to Note

• Ethics has to do with our behaviour, the manner in which we conduct our research

• Is it morally acceptable?

• Are we morally responsible?

• We should be guided by social norms— notions of behaviour that ought to be adopted

• This means that there should be some **code of ethics**, set of laws or ethical codes to be followed
What does it all mean?

• “Researchers must define for themselves what is ethical in research”
  Berg (2010)

• “Ethical research requires personal integrity from the researcher”
  Cooper and Schindler (2006, pg. 116)
The Ethics Conundrum

Privacy

Informed Consent

Deception

Confidentiality
Overall Importance

• In general ethics is concerned with how you treat participants in your research, how you collect data from participants and maintain confidentiality, and lastly how you analyse and report your findings.

• The goal is to ensure that no one is harmed or suffers adverse consequences from research activities.

• To avoid your research becoming ‘null and void’, unacceptable by norms, rescinded.
General Ethical Issues

• Privacy of possible and actual participants
• Voluntary nature of participation and the right to withdraw
• Consent and possible deception of participants
• Maintenance of confidentiality of data
• Reactions of participants to the way in which you seek to collect data
• Effects on participants of the way data is used
• Behaviour and objectivity of you as a researcher
It’s all about the Participants

• Safeguards
  – Explain study benefits
  – Explain participant rights and protections
  – Obtain informed consent

• Avoid
  – Deception
  – Infringement of Privacy
  – Confidentiality breaches
The Nature of Participant Consent

- **Lack of consent**
  - Participant lacks knowledge
  - Researcher uses deception to collect data

- **Implied consent**
  - Participant does not fully understand her/his rights
  - Researcher implies consent about use of data from fact of access or return of questionnaire

- **Informed consent**
  - Participant’s consent given freely and based on full information about participation rights and use of data
Rights to Privacy and Confidentiality

• All individuals have a right to privacy and researchers must **Respect** that right

• Privacy guarantee is important to retain validity of the research and

• To encourage participants to answer truthfully

• Protect Confidentiality by:
  – Obtaining signed nondisclosure documents
  – Restrict access to participant information
  – Reveal participant info only with written consent
  – Not disclosing data subsets
Ethical Issues at different Stages of Research

General ethical issues
- Privacy, voluntary nature, consent, deception, confidentiality, anonymity, embarrassment, stress, harm, discomfort, pain, objectivity, quality of research

Stage of research
- Formulating and clarifying your research topic (Chapters 2 to 4)
- Designing your research and gaining access (Chapters 5 and 6)
- Collecting your data (Chapters 7 to 11)

Stage-specific ethical issues
- Researcher’s right to absence of sponsor coercion, Sponsor’s right to useful research, Sponsor’s/gatekeeper’s/participant’s right to quality research
- Researcher’s right to absence of gatekeeper coercion, Participant’s/gatekeeper’s right to be fully informed, Participant’s right to privacy, Sponsor’s/gatekeeper’s/participant’s right to quality research
- Researcher’s right to absence of sponsor/gatekeeper coercion, Researcher’s right to safety, Participant’s right to informed consent, Participant’s right to withdraw, Participant’s deception, Participant’s rights to confidentiality/anonymity, Organisation(s)’ rights to confidentiality/anonymity, Sponsor’s/gatekeeper’s/participant’s right to quality research
**General ethical issues**
- Privacy, voluntary nature, consent, deception, confidentiality, anonymity, embarrassment, stress, harm, discomfort, pain, objectivity, quality of research

**Stage of research**
- Collecting your data *(Chapters 7 to 11)*
- Processing and storing your data *(Chapters 12 and 13)*
- Analysing your data and reporting your findings *(Chapters 12 to 14)*

**Stage-specific ethical issues**
- Researcher’s right to absence of sponsor/gatekeeper coercion,
- Researcher’s right to safety,
- Participant’s right to informed consent,
- Participant’s right to withdraw,
- Participant’s deception,
- Participant’s rights to confidentiality/anonymity,
- Organisation(s)’ rights to confidentiality/anonymity,
- Sponsor’s/gatekeeper’s/participant’s right to quality research

- Participant’s rights as individuals to the processing and storing of her/his personal data

- Researcher’s right to absence of sponsor/gatekeeper coercion,
- Organisation(s)’ rights to confidentiality/anonymity,
- Participant’s rights to confidentiality/anonymity
- Sponsor’s/gatekeeper’s/participant’s right to quality research
Examples

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xOYLCy5PVgM
Bibliography


