ETHICAL ISSUES IN HUMAN RESEARCH

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This session will explain the meaning and relevance of ethics in psychology and for that matter other professions. In this session, you will learn some of the specific ethical principles in psychology as drawn from the American Psychological Association (APA) and The British Psychological Society (BPS). This session will also deals with the ethical issues involving human beings.
At the end of this session, you will be able to:

- Explain what is meant by ethics in relation to psychology.
- Discuss some of the antecedence that lead to the emergence of ethics in psychology.
- Explain the relevance of ethics in psychological research and practise.
- Mention and explain the key ethical principles in psychology.


The session notes titled “Ethical issues in Human Research”
Ethics in Psychological Research
1. Introduction to ethics in research.
2. Ethical issues and human participants in research.
3. Ethical issues and nonhuman subjects in research.
4. Ethical issues and scientific integrity.
Ethics
Introduction to Ethics in Research

• Ethics is the study of proper action.
• Ethical issues must be considered at each step in the research process.
• **Basic categories of ethical responsibility include;**
  a. Responsibility to human and non human participants.
  b. Responsibility to the discipline of science.
Psychologists must ask and answer questions such as:

- Are we putting our participants at risk?
- Is our experimental treatment harmful?
- Is the information we will gather from our experiment worth the potential risk and harm to participants that is involved?
The Need for Ethical Principles (Background)

• Four instances that created major concern regarding research ethics are:

  • The atrocities of World War II (The Nuremberg trial and Code, 1947)
  • The Tuskegee Syphilis Project (1972)
  • Unsuspecting patients were injected with live cancer cells - 1963
Atrocities of the WW11
The Nuremberg Code includes 10 principles to guide physician-investigators in experiments involving human subjects.
The Tuskegee Syphilis Project (1972)
The Need for Ethical Principles (Background)
Milgram’s study on Obedience (1963)
Need for Ethics

Philip Zimbardo’s Prison Experiment

- American psychological association (APA) Guidelines
- APA Ethics Code contains ten ethical standards
APA Code of Ethics
Five General Principles for Conduct

A. Benevolence and nonmaleficence
B. Fidelity and Responsibility
C. Integrity
D. Justice
E. Respect for People’s Rights and Dignities
1. Institutional Approval

• Researchers must submit protocol to Institutional Review Boards which look carefully at the work, pointing out possible problems.

• IRB consists of members from many academic areas.
2. Informed Consent

• All facts that may potentially influence the participant’s willingness to participate in the research must be told to them beforehand so that they can give INFORMED consent.
Extra consent needs to be given if participants are to be recorded or their images and pictures are be used.
3. Confidentiality and Anonymity

• **Confidentiality**
  • is the practice of keeping strictly secret and private the information or measurements obtained from an individual during a research study

• **Anonymity**
  • is the practice of ensuring that an individual’s name is not directly associated with the information or measurements obtained from that individuals (e.g. using codes)
4. Client/Patient, Student, and Subordinate Research Participants

- Clients, students, and patients are in a vulnerable position. They may feel that volunteering for research is sort of “required”. That is, they may feel coerced.
5. Offering Inducements for Research Participation

- Financial inducements to participation can act to coerce people:
  - “I really need the money, but I’ll only get it if I participate.”

- Even worse than coercion, financial inducements can easily create exploitation of certain classes of people (poor, low income)
6. Deception in Research

- Deception

- **Passive deception (or omission)** is the withholding or omitting of information (researcher intentionally does not tell participants some information about the study).

- **Active deception (or commission)** is the presenting of misinformation about the study to participants (misleading participants about the specific purpose of the study).
7. Debriefing

- Debriefing is used to remove misconception that deception may have created, or any misconceptions that may have arisen.
  
  - Misconceptions can cause psychological harm.
  
  - Benevolence and nonmaleficence
1. Justification of Research: the research should have a clear scientific purpose.

2. Seek approval from an IRB

3. Get the animals lawfully

4. Provide humane treatment

5. Terminate their lives in a humane way

6. Experimental Procedures: Humane consideration for the well-being of the animal should be incorporated into the design and conduct of all procedures involving animals
• Two ethical issues relevant to the written reports of the research study

  a) Fraud
  • is an explicit effort of a researcher to deceive and misrepresent the data
  • fraud needs to be distinguished from an error
Two ethical issues relevant to the written reports of the research study (cont.)

B) Plagiarism

- Is the representation of someone else’s ideas or words as one’s own, it is unethical!!!
10. Publication Credit

- Psychologists put their name only on research to which they have actually contributed.

- First authorship should always go to that person that made the largest contribution to the work.
11. Duplicate Publication of Data

- Psychologists do not deceptively publish the same data twice.

- It is possible to publish the same data twice, as long as proper acknowledgement is given.
12. Sharing Research Data for Verification

- Psychologists do not withhold data.

- Published data becomes public property.

- If another researcher requests your data, it is common courtesy to share it.
The Experimenter’s (Researcher) Responsibility

• The experimenter is the single individual who is ultimately accountable for the ethical conduct of the research project.

• The researcher carefully weighs the *benefits* and *costs* of a project and then decides whether to conduct it.
The Participant’s Responsibility

– Be on time for the research appointment.
– Participants have the responsibility to listen carefully to the experimenter and ask questions in order to understand the research.
– Participants should take the research seriously and cooperate with the experimenter.
– When the study has been completed, participants share the responsibility for understanding what happened.
– Participants have the responsibility for honoring the researcher’s request that they not discuss the study with anyone else who might be a participant.