

Making Right Decisions: Ethical Issues for Social Science Researchers

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Abstract

Ethics exist within a social context, which makes ethical decision making a complex process. Including an ethical perspective as a foundation of all kinds of research is vital. Researchers need to follow standards of professional conduct to ensure the welfare of participants and uphold the integrity of social science research. Social science scholars encounter ethical challenges when studying and dealing with human behaviour. The genesis of research ethics was the atrocities experienced in clinical trials such as medical experimentation carried out by Nazi physicians in the Second World War and the Tuskegee Syphilis Study (Samantaray and Sahu, 2008: Babbie,2007:Robson,2002). Samantary et al (2008) posits that a reading of social science research journals provide little guidance on ethical responsibilities toward research participants, which should be considered when undertaking research. They argue that there are seldom detailed discussions of ethical principles that guide interaction with participants. However, there are general principles that most researchers would agree on. Unlike scientists who conduct their work under controlled conditions, social science researchers conduct their studies in the field. To study the society, an array of research methods is employed and for collected data to be useful it has to be honestly collected, it should be reliable and collected with informed consent. Research participants should be respected while the principles of beneficence and justice should be upheld. Some of the ethical issues in social science research include deception, confidentiality, preconceived notions, and recruitment methods, security of data, falsification of data, acceptable standards, conflict of interest, plagiarism, rationale and presentation of results (Robson, 2002). This paper intends to examine the genesis of research ethics, examine ethical issues in social science research and to provide suggestions for maintaining integrity in social science research. The purpose of this paper is to perpetuate dialogue with scholars and practitioners concerning the place of ethics in research so that it can be applied in social science research for the benefit of participants. The

significance of this study is to enhance understanding and consideration of ethical issues in social science research. Data will be collected through document desk review. Findings from the desk review will inform social science researchers and equip them with knowledge to attend to risk of potential harm and consider the potential benefit of research to individuals and society and minimize risks which could be psychological, sociological, emotional, and financial and legal.

Key Words: Ethics, ethical Issues, ethical issues in social science research, principles of ethics, research ethics, institutional review boards

I Definition of Ethics and its Importance in Research

The term ethics derives from the word “ethos” which means character (HesseBiber, 2005). Reynold (1979) defines ethics as referring to rules of conduct, typically, to conformity to a code or set of principles. Many professions working with people have adopted such codes (Social Research Association (SRA), 2003; Robson, 2002). When people think of ethics, they think of morals, rules for distinguishing right or wrong, a code of professional conduct, teachings of the bible, but the most common way of defining ethics according to Resnik (2011), ethics are the norms for conduct that distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Ethical norms are usually learned at home, in schools, in church and in social settings. Moral development is a continuous process and at all levels of development. Ethical norms are unique to individuals, institutions and society because of varied interpretations and culture. Societies have legal rules and laws that govern behaviour which is emancipated to be widely acceptable. Another way of defining ethics is its focus on the disciplines that study standards of conduct such as philosophy, theology, law, psychology or sociology. Ethics can also be defined as a method, procedure or perspective for deciding how to act and for analyzing complex problems and issues (Resnik, 2011). Ethical discussions are usually detached or remain marginalized in discussion of research projects, however, ethics is central in the research process and it should not be considered as an afterthought. It is the moral integrity of the researcher to ensure that the research process and the findings are valid and trustworthy. SRA (2003) posits that recent

legislative changes and concerns about litigation have increased funders' interest in and concern about ethical practice in social research, however, responsibility for ethical awareness rests with individuals.

Ethical norms govern conduct in medicine, law, engineering, business, administration, and education and in the construction industry. Norms also serve the aims or goals of research and apply to people who engage in scientific or scholarly research that explains the existence of research ethics which studies norms in research. Adherence to ethical norms in research is important for various reasons, first, is to promote the aims of research, second, promote the values that are essential for collaborative work, third, helps to ensure that researchers are accountable to the public, fourth, it helps to build public support for research and finally it promotes a variety of other important moral and social values such as social responsibility, human rights, animal welfare, compliance with the law, and health and safety(Resnik,2011).

There is increased concern for accountability in research which has led to development of research governance and research guidelines which enhances responsible behaviour. This has led to development of Social Research Association whose aim is to promote ethical practice in research by offering guidelines on best practice for individual members and research organizations (SRA, 2003). These guidelines are meant to inform and advise.

11. Genesis of Research Ethics

The Foundations of medical ethics goes back to writings attributed to Hippocrates and deal primarily with the relationship between individual physicians and their individual patients (Paulson, 2006). In the late 19th Century, William Osler believed that every treatment is an experiment (Jonsen, 2000). At the beginning of the 20th Century, medical research as research began to come into its own (Jonsen 2000 in Paulson, 2006). However, the recognition of the need for a code of ethics governing research emerged after World War II (Paulson, 2006). The concern for the rights of subjects grew out of the revelations of the atrocities that were performed in the guise of scientific research on Jews and other racial and ethnic minority groups in Nazi concentration camps by Nazi physicians working in death camps during World War II (HesseBiber,2005: Paulson, 2006). The revelations of this experiment

resulted in creation of the Nuremberg Code (1949) which requires that participation in all kinds of research should be voluntary. The other code of ethics is the Declaration of Helsinki (1964). After World War II, American Physicians conducted Malaria research on German prisoners housed in prisons in Illinois (Harkness, 1996 in Paulson, 2006). The Tuskegee syphilis study is an example of research impropriety carried out in the United States after World War II (Heintzelman, 1996). It was in the 1960s and 1970s that the field of bioethics began to emerge and actively study, report and provide guidance regarding ethical issues in research (Callahan and Jennings, 2002). The rights of research subjects grew out of the atrocities that were performed in the guise of research on the Jews and other racial and ethnic minority groups in Nazi concentration camps during World War II (Samantary et al,2008).

The Tuskegee Syphilis Study illuminates ethical issues in research that were not addressed at the time of the study. The study was conducted by United States (U.S.) Public Health Service between 1932 and 1972 (Babbie, 2007), it examined untreated cases of syphilis in human subjects to determine the natural cause of the disease. Participants were not asked to provide informed consent to participate. Those infected were given standard treatment at that time, however those men participating in the study were not treated and they were Negro men. When antibiotics became available in 1940s, treatment was withheld from the infected despite knowing that if left untreated the disease would progress to increased disability and eventually death. The experiment lasted over four decades and it was until 1972 that the national media exposed the saga which influenced government officials to end the experiment. By that time 74 of the test participants were still alive, at least 28 and perhaps more than 100 had died directly from syphilis (Hientzelman, 1996). Thereafter there was a government investigation of the entire project in 1972 and a review panel found the study 'ethically unjustified' and argued that penicillin should have been provided to the men. There are a number of ethical issues in this case: at no time were participants asked to give informed consent, neither were they told of what the study would entail. Those who participated did not participate voluntarily, they were deceived into thinking that they were getting free treatment from government doctors. It was never explained that the study was being carried out to detect syphilis, they were not told that they had

syphilis, the cause of the disease nor the treatment. The recruitment letter did not mention the standard treatment to be administered but instead claimed that the participants were to receive “special treatment” and that they would have “people waiting on them.” At times diagnostic procedures such as spinal taps were falsely presented to participants as cures for syphilis (Babbie, 2007). Even after penicillin had been accepted as an effective treatment for syphilis, the participants were denied treatment, they were even kept from seeking treatment in the community, because the researchers wanted to observe the full progression of the disease. There is the question of whether the researchers took advantage of a vulnerable population who did not have resources to afford medical treatment or the education to question their medical expertise. The researchers also had a racist attitude, that is why they recruited black males which made it easier to justify their decision to provide them with treatment. The researchers’ decisions were poor. This kind of research is unacceptable because it did not protect the participants, it violated their rights, and they were exposed to life threatening risks and did not benefit from the study. The study demonstrates how racism can lead to inhuman treatment of human subjects (Gamble, 1997). When the details of the Tuskegee syphilis became widely known, the U.S. government took action, including a formal apology by President Clinton and a program of financial reparations to the families of the subjects (Babbie, 2007). Human research should never injure the people being studied, regardless whether they volunteer for the study.

111. Research Ethics and Social Science Research

Social science research has grown over the decades (Samantary et al, 2008). Participants in real world research may sometimes be involved without their knowledge (Robson, 2002), they may be misled about the true nature of the study or they may be faced with situations that cause stress or anxiety. Questionable practices arise from the kind of research questions asked and methods used to seek answers which can be manipulated to avoid misleading results. Ethical considerations in biomedical, behavioural and social research have come afore (Robson, 2002) locally, regionally and internationally. In social science we may not control the situation, but there is almost always the intention or possibility of change associated with the study, this forces the researcher into value judgements and moral dilemmas. This could start from the premise that ‘this is a good thing’ probably

an improvement of what is on offer, for example, introduction of computers in management of the procurement process. This brings to question which organizations are to be involved, which organization will be denied the equipment during the study and what they are bound to lose. The understanding of ethics is rather fluid and there is a lot of dynamism. Globally, researchers are going through a period of paramount change in the understanding of ethics in applied social research. From the time immediately after World War II, there has been a growing consensus on the key ethical principles that should underlie a research endeavour. Researchers all over the world carry out research which involves human subjects either directly or indirectly. These populations include minorities, marginalized groups, multicultural and multiregional societies and vulnerable groups. These groups are voiceless and are therefore likely to be affected by the studies they participate in. Social scientists have the moral responsibility of protecting the rights of participants, they should be the custodians of social conscience through analysis of ethics, social realities and shared patterns of behaviour. The SRA explains that here have been legislative changes and concerns about litigation which has increased funders interest and concern about ethical practice in social research, there have also been various initiatives and debates about the right ways to ensure compliance with good ethical practice across all sectors of social research. There is increased concern for accountability in research in various spheres including police service, health and medicine, social care, financial and commercial enterprises which has led to the establishment of systems of “research governance”, that is, ways of discovering and sharing information that are open to public scrutiny and can be seen to be subject to the highest ethical standards. It is vital to give serious thought to ethical considerations at a very early stage of carrying out an inquiry, this should be focused on right from identification of the topic. HesseBiber (2005) emphasises that a consideration of ethics needs to be a critical part of the substructure of the research process from the initial conception of the problem to the interpretation and publishing of research findings. With this kind of a situation, it is the responsibility of individual social researchers and funders because the action of each affects people as individuals and communities. Discussion of ethical principles stresses the potential risks of participants, there are also risks to researchers themselves such as with professionals working in hospitals and teachers. Craig,

Corden and Thornton, (2000) discussed safety in social science research and listed potential risks as risk of physical threat, risk of psychological trauma, as a result of actual or threatened violence or the nature of what is disclosed during interaction, risk of being in a compromising situation, in which there may be accusations of improper behaviour and increased exposure to general risks of everyday life and social interaction such as travel, infectious disease, accident. They provide suggestions for a code of practice for safety of social science researchers. An example of a study in social science research was the one carried out in 1971 by psychologist Phillip Zimbardo,

He created his famous simulation of prison life, widely known as the Stanford prison experiment, to study the dynamics of prisoner-guard interactions. Zimbardo employed Stanford students as subjects and randomly assigned them to roles as prisoners or guards...the simulation became quickly and increasingly real for all the participants, including Zimbardo, who served as prison superintendent. It became evident that many of the student-prisoners were suffering psychological damage as a consequence of their mock incarceration, and some of the student-guards were soon exhibiting degrees of sadism that would later challenge their own self-images. As these developments became apparent to Zimbardo, he terminated the experiment. He then created a debriefing program in which all the participants were counselled so as to avoid any lasting damage from the experience (Babbie, 2007:66).

This is an illustration of responsibility of researchers to protect research participants from potential harm, the researcher must look for the subtlest dangers and guard against them. Babbie(1967) explains a survey of church women where ministers in a sample of churches were asked to distribute questionnaires to a specified sample of members, collect them and return them to the research office. One of the ministers read through all the questionnaires before returning them and during a subsequent sermon he said that many of the congregants were atheists and that they were going to hell. As much as he could not identify the people who gave particular responses, many respondents endured personal harm. Avoiding harm is not easy, but sensitivity to issues, planning and experience in research can be utilized to improve researcher's tact in delicate areas in research.

IV Principles of Ethics

Ethical practice is guided by core principles which are meant to guide the researcher. Social science researchers have obligations to society in that for research to be beneficial to society it has to be conducted responsibly, in the light of moral and legal context of the society in which they practise. Researchers should maintain high scientific standards in the methods they employ in data collection, analysis and dissemination of findings. Social researchers also have an obligation to funders and employers. Relations between these entities should be balanced and there should be no compromise of morality, the law and professional integrity should be upheld. Researchers have obligations to colleagues as social research depends upon maintenance of standards and appropriate professional behaviour. Without compromising obligations to funders and employers, participants and society, methods, procedures and findings should be open to collegial review. There should also be concern for safety and security of colleagues when conducting field research. Social science researchers should strive to protect participants from harm arising from participation from research. Harm could be psychological, physical or sociological. This requires that participation should be voluntary, and informed as much as possible, neither should any group be excluded from consideration for participation. It is the responsibility of researchers to declare conflicts of interest and absolve from participating, they should therefore be sensitive to avoid undue influence of the process. On the same note, they should pursue objectivity by not selecting methods that will produce misleading results or misinterpret findings by commission or omission. SRA (2003) emphasises that in order to conduct certain inquiries, social science researchers need to collaborate with colleagues in other disciplines as well as staff of other cadres and students. This requires that social scientists make their ethical principles clear and take into account ethical principles of their collaborations.

It is worth noting that social research does not depend much on what professional bodies assert but rather the individual conduct and values of individual researchers. Social inquiries are often collaborations among colleagues of different levels of seniority and from different disciplines, this requires that the careers and contributions of each should be taken into account. Social scientists have no special entitlement to study all phenomena which requires their awareness of the intrusive potential

of their work because the advancement of knowledge and pursuit of information is not sufficient for overriding social or cultural value, for example, contacting participants without warning, asking questions which may cause distress or offence, observing people without their knowledge, obtaining information on individuals or groups from third parties. In conducting research with vulnerable populations like children, pregnant women and prisoners extra care has to be taken to protect their rights(SRA, 2003). There are particular problems that are associated with some groups such as children, persons with mental handicap or mental disturbance, prisoners and other ‘captive populations’, for example persons in homes for the aged, the powerless and homeless. In such situations, ethical review committees, review boards or legal experts can play a key role in such circumstances. Robson (2002) argues that the issues are whether such participants can rationally, knowingly and freely give consent. This can be done by acquiring written consent and assent, voluntary participation, seeking of authority from relevant parties, upholding of confidentiality and making more use of available data, for example use of administrative data for which informed consent should be sought.

V Ethical Decision Making in Research

Codes, policies and principles are important and useful in making decisions in research. Due to the importance of ethics for the conduct of research (Resnik, 2011) many professional organizations, government agencies and universities have adopted specific codes, rules and policies relating to research ethics. Government agencies such as National Institutes of Health, National Science Foundation, and US Department of Agriculture have ethics rules for funded researchers. Other ethics policies include Uniform requirements for Manuscripts submitted to Biomedical Journals(International committee of Medical Journal Editors), the Chemist’s Code of Conduct(American Chemical Society), Code of Ethics(American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science), Ethical Principles of Psychologists (American Psychological Association), Statement on Professional Ethics (American Association of University Professors), the Nuremborg Code, the Declaration of

Helsinki(World Medical Association)(Rensik, 2011) and Council for International Organizations of Medical Science(CIOMS) guidelines for Biomedical Research Involving Human Subjects.

To engage with the ethical dimension of research, one can ask the following questions:

- (1) What moral principles guide your research?
- (2) How do ethical issues enter into your selection of a research problem
- (3) How do ethical issues affect how you conduct your research- the design of your study, your sampling procedure, data collection, data analysis and interpretation
- (4) What responsibility do you have toward your research subjects? Do you have informed consent? What ethical dilemmas might come into play in deciding what research findings to publish? Will your research benefit those who participated in the study?

Although codes, policies and principles are important, they like any set of rules do not cover all situations, for example in the process of research one can come across conflicting rules which require considerable interpretation. This therefore requires that researchers learn how to interpret, assess and apply various research rules. Researchers should also discuss with other researchers whenever they find themselves in ethical dilemmas and consult Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) because many of them have personnel who are experienced in applied ethics. Decision making should be guided by codes, policies, principles, application of ethical rules and consultation. Robson (2002) outlines ten questionable practices in social science research: involving people without their knowledge, coercing them to participate, withholding information about the true nature of the research, deceiving the participant, inducing participants to commit acts diminishing their self-esteem, violating rights of self-determination, exposing participants to physical or mental stress, invading privacy, withholding benefits from some participants and not treating participants fairly or with considerations, or with respect; Kimmel(1988) discusses these points further in his book.

There are cases that are regarded as unethical by researchers, they are referred to as deviations because they are not in line with acceptable research practices, examples of this include publishing the same paper in two different journals without telling the editors, submitting the same paper to different journals, including a colleague as an author on paper in return for a favour even though the colleague did not make a serious contribution to the paper, discussing with your colleagues confidential data from a paper you are reviewing for a journal, trimming outliers from a data set without discussing your reasons in paper, using an inappropriate statistical technique in order to enhance the significance of your research, bypassing the peer review process and announcing your results through a press conference without giving peers adequate information to review work, conducting a review of literature that fails to acknowledge the contributions of other people in the field or relevant prior work, stretching the truth on a grant application in order to convince reviewers that your project will make a significant contribution to the field, stretching the truth on a job application or curriculum vita, giving the same research project to two graduate students in order to see who can do it the fastest, overworking, neglecting or exploiting graduate or post-doctoral students, failing to keep good research records, failing to keep research data for a considerable period of time, making derogatory comments and personal attacks in your review of author's submission, promising a student better grades for sexual favours, rejecting a manuscript for publication without even reading it, sabotaging someone's work and making unauthorized copies of data, papers or computer programs"(Resnik, 2011). Researchers have a general ethical responsibility when they discover something illegal such as sexual or physical abuse of children, this has to be reported to the police or appropriate authority reason being the requirement to report over-rides any confidentiality agreements (Robson, 2002) and in circumstances where law has been broken. There are ethical issues in reporting, researchers should keep assurances of anonymity and confidentiality. This can be done by use of pseudonyms for persons and settings and reasonable precautions should be taken ensure anonymity. It is pertinent that researchers give an honest and truthful account of what has been done. A basic rule is that other people's work should not be passed off as one's own, all those who give assistance in the research process should be acknowledged by referencing of previously published

material, explicit acknowledgement of ideas or advice given by colleagues or others. Robson (2002) brings up an interesting dimension into research ethics, he says sexist-language is offensive and that there are guidelines aimed at sensitizing people to the forms that sexist language takes and suggesting non-sexist alternatives, there is also a set of guidelines concerning issues concerning racist language. The guidelines can be found in British Sociological Association, (1989a and 1989b).

VI Ethical Principles that Various Codes Address in Social Science Research

There are a number of professional associations, government agencies and universities that have adopted specific codes, rules and policies relating to research ethics (Resnik, 2011), this emphasises that the importance of ethics is for the conduct of research. Some of the government agencies are National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Science Foundation (NSF), and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Other influential research ethics policies include the Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts, Statements on Ethics and Professional Responsibility (American Anthropological Association), Statement on Professional Ethics (American Association of University Professors), the Nuremberg Code and the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association). In addition (Hessebiber, 2005: Babbie, 2007) professional associations that provide ethical research guidelines to their members include the American Educational Research Association (AERA), the American Sociological Association (ASA), and the American Psychological Association (APA) which is a stimulating text on ethical conflicts (Robson, 2002). The Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) also has a code of ethics accessible online (Babbie, 2007). Researchers should familiarize themselves with the code or codes most relevant to one's work. The following are various principles that various codes address: Honesty, objectivity, integrity, carefulness, openness, and respect for intellectual property, confidentiality, responsible publication, responsible mentoring, and respect for colleagues, social responsibility, non-discrimination, competence, legality and protection. Some ethical principles have been discussed by Resnik(2011) and Shamoo and Resnik (2003) as follows:

I. Honesty

Researchers should strive for honesty in all communications. Data, results, methods, procedures and publication status should be reported honestly. Data should not be fabricated, falsified, or misrepresented. Colleagues, granting agencies or the public should not be deceived.

II. Objectivity

Researchers should strive to avoid bias in research design, data collection, data analysis, data interpretation, peer review, personnel decisions, grant writing, expert testimony. Conflict of interest such as personal or financial interest that may affect research should be disclosed.

III. Integrity

In the process of carrying out research, promises and agreements with participants, stakeholders and funding organizations should be kept. Researchers should strive for consistency of thought and action.

IV. Carefulness

Researchers should avoid careless errors and negligence. They should carefully and critically examine their own work and the work of your peers. Records of research activities such as data collected and correspondences with journals and agencies should be well kept.

V. Openness

Research is carried out for development of knowledge and providing solutions to challenges, it is therefore necessary to share data, results, and ideas and be open to criticism and new ideas.

VI. Respect for Intellectual Property

Honouring patents, copyrights and other forms of intellectual property is essential. Unpublished data, methods or results should not be used without permission. Credit should be given where it

is due. Give proper acknowledgement or credit for all contributions to research. Plagiarism is an illegal offence.

VII. Confidentiality

Participants should be protected against exposure and privacy should be upheld. Protect confidential communications such as personal records. SRA (2003) explains that research data should not be concerned with the identity of individuals because research is collected to answer questions of 'what,' 'how' and 'not' 'who.'

VIII. Responsible Publication

Publish in order to advance research and scholarship and not to advance own career. Researchers should avoid duplicate and wasteful publication

IX. Responsible Mentoring

Students rely a lot on researchers for mentorship. It is the responsibility of researchers to promote the welfare of students and allow them to make their own decisions.

X. Respect for Colleagues

Respect your colleagues and treat them fairly

XI. Social Responsibility

Strive to promote social good and prevent or mitigate social harms through research, public education and advocacy. The other ethical principles that have been discussed by Resnik(2011) and Shamoo and Resnik(2003) are non-discrimination, competence, legality, animal care and human subjects protection. Ethics in research determine the quality of research work and has implications for society.

XII. Enabling Participation

It is the responsibility of social researchers to ensure inclusion of all individuals or groups who might otherwise be excluded. This can be done by paying attention to unique needs for example language interpretation, signers or communication aids, flexibility in appointment times and length of interviews and in some cases preference of a particular gender or ethnic background. Correspondence with participants should be in plain English and in a form that takes cognizance of individual needs. This requires that the researcher identifies the best medium of communication (SRA, 2003).

For a long time research ethics has been focused on biomedical research and a question that often arises is the extent to which ethical issues in sciences carry over into the behavioural and social sciences(Samantarav, 2008: HeiseBiber, 2005). In qualitative research, it is difficult for a researcher to account for all the happenings in the research setting. In social science, there is usually more engagement with research participants which raises the possibility of undue power, influence and authority (HeiseBiber, 2005).

VII. Guidelines in Social Science Research

Various guidelines have been developed Nuremborg Code (1964), Helsinki Declaration (1964), CIOMS guidelines (World Health Association) and Ethical Guidelines (Social Research Association). Social researchers work within a variety of economic, cultural, legal and political settings each of which influences emphasis and the focus of their research. They work within one of several disciplines, which have their own research procedures and techniques and ethical issues. Social researchers work in fields like Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology, Theology and Economics. These disciplines have their own ethical conventions that may influence their research. Even within the same setting, individuals may have different moral precepts guiding their work (SRA, 2003). Guidelines are aimed at providing a basis for making ethical decisions which should be informed by shared values and experience. The guidelines offer a framework within which a social researcher should be able to work comfortably without contravening the principles of ethics which are respect, autonomy and justice. Where departures from the

framework of principles are considered, they should be the result of deliberation. Guidelines are designed to be informative rather than prescriptive, applicable as far as possible to different areas of methodology and application. However guidelines are not exhaustive because ethical issues are dynamic and fluid, they change according to time, place, and geographical set up, culture and therefore they require periodic review and amendment. The SRA guidelines restrict themselves to matters of concern to social research.

VIII. Ethical Dilemmas in Social Science Research

Many are the times when researchers carry out ethnographical studies which they do undercover in order to collect data in a natural setting. William(1996) describes a study where researchers went undercover to study the drug culture and used deception in order to find out about the inner workings of the social life of drug dealers and drug takers, often observing individuals engaging in illegal activities and sometimes finding themselves engaging in the same activities. Asking the participants for informed consent would be useless because of the kind of activities they are involved in, they would not want to be studied. Social science studies involve a lot of qualitative research which require some deception especially in behavioural studies. There is usually some kind of deception between the researcher and the researched. Objectivity is a requisite characteristic for researchers, Herbert Gans in HessiBiber(2005) argues that this objectivity is enhanced by deception. Closeness between the researcher and the researched has its own problems which can unduly influence collection of information; it can create conflicts and deceptions. Issues of disclosure and trust are also likely to arise. Sometimes researchers find themselves in ethical dilemmas, they could have divide loyalties in terms of professional and occupational commitments. Linda Nutt describes how her professional role as a social work practitioner conflicted with her role as a researcher (Bell and Nutt, 2002), she saw a sexually explicit picture in the hallway of a home that was to take up foster children.

IX. Maintenance of Integrity of Social Science Research

It is important to adhere to ethical norms in research. These norms promote the aims of research such as knowledge, truth and avoidance of error. Guidelines provide a positively oriented set of practical suggestions for maintaining integrity in research. Observance of guidelines help in avoiding departures from accepted ethical research practice and prevent deviations that constitute research misconduct (Office of Research Integrity, 2011). Ethical concerns in research are the subject of Responsible Conduct of Research. There are varied matters of ethical concern, they include plagiarism, misuse of privileged information, fabrication and falsification of data and misinterpretation of data, use and misuse of data, ownership and access of data, storage and retention of data, authorship and other publication issues. Publication issues include criteria of authorship, order of authors, self-citations, duplicate publication, and accessibility of publications and early release of information about to be published. Researchers are obliged to report avoid interference with data, they should correct any errors and to incorporate their Curriculum Vitae into a proposal to show competence. Offices of Research Integrity (2003) posit that conflicts of interest can compromise integrity of research or even lead to misconduct. For this reason, researchers should disclose conflicts of interest to the institution, funding agency; this is done to avoid escalation of conflicts. Research involves a lot of cooperation and coordination amongst diverse disciplines and institutions which require values that promote collaborative work such as trust, accountability, trust and fairness. Investigators who lead research groups have leadership and supervisory responsibilities with respect to the research performed by members of the group. A principal investigator should put together the research group and arrange for an adequate financial and administrative structure to support the research. A principal investigator provides guidance and advice to individual members of the group, ensures that responsible conduct in research is upheld and that there is scientific integrity. The investigator plays the mentorship role, he is responsible for the intellectual and professional development of graduate students, postdoctoral fellows and junior faculty in the group (Offices of Research Integrity, 2003). Investigators should be responsible to the funding agencies, by reporting procedures and results. Ethical norms that should be upheld include guidelines for authorship,

copyright and patenting policies, data sharing policies and confidentiality rules in peer review which are designed to protect intellectual property interests. Researchers always want to receive credit for their contributions. Ethical norms help to ensure that researchers can be accountable to the public and they help to build support for research. Organizations will fund projects that are spearheaded by teams or individuals that are trustworthy and of high integrity. Many of the guidelines in research promote other moral and social values like social responsibility, human rights, animal welfare, and compliance with the law, health and safety. Research should at no time harm human beings physically, mentally, psychologically or socially. Rights should be observed in observation studies where behaviour patterns are observed without the subjects' knowledge. Researchers should take care not to infringe on private space of individuals or groups. This will vary from culture to culture, where possible researchers should attempt to obtain consent post hoc (Social Science Research, 2003). Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) also called Ethics Review Committees (ERCs) have a chief responsibility to ensure that risks faced by human participants are minimal. IRBs can ask researchers to revise the study design, or refuse to approve a study because of eminent disregard for ethical issues. Where minimal risks are viewed as unavoidable, researchers are required to prepare an "informed consent" that describes the risks clearly. Much of the impetus for establishing IRBs had to do with medical experimentation on humans and many social research studies are generally regarded as exempt from IRB review. The guideline to be followed by IRBs are in the Federal Exemption Categories(45 CFR 46.101[B] which exempts a variety of research situations, that is, research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, research involving the use of educational tests, research involving the collection or study of existing data, research and demonstration projects which are conducted by or subject to the approval of Department Agency Heads and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine(Babbie,2007).

X. Recommendations

1. Institutions should produce guidelines which form perspectives of multiculturalism and gender equality to inform and advise researchers
2. Ethical guidelines should have clearly defined authors and be updated regularly to account for changes in practice and relevant legislation.
3. To protect researchers from accusations of failing to secure informed consent, participants should sign a consent form. Informed consent should be gained to ensure participants understand what is being done to them, limits of participation and awareness of potential risks and benefits. Participants should also be aware of entitlement to refuse at any stage for whatever reason and to withdraw data supplied. While informed consent is sought, there should also be no compromise of principles confidentiality and anonymity.
4. Ethical decisions should be made based on specific research situations, culture and consideration of potential benefits and risks.
5. In conducting research with vulnerable populations, care must be taken to protect their rights and ensure their compliance is freely entered in to.
6. Institutions should consider establishing Institutional Review Boards whose primary function is to apply ethical standards and principles. This is done to ensure respect, justice and beneficence and to meet the requirements of various guidelines for research.
7. Research institutions and institutions of higher learning should appoint research integrity officers whose duty would be to report findings of misconduct to Institutional Review Boards (IRB) or to relevant funding agencies.

XI. Conclusion

Despite the general definition of ethics as general conformance to standards of conduct of a given profession or group, what is regarded as ethics in day-to-day life is a matter of agreement among members of a group, although different groups subscribe to different codes of conduct. However, anyone involved in social science research needs to be aware of ethical issues in research so that they uphold the principles of research and prevent violation of rights of individuals and where necessary, they should seek ethical approval, especially if they are dealing with human participants, or vulnerable populations. Research ethics is an evolving subject, which requires researchers to keep abreast of developments in the research arena.

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