ABSTRACT

Ethical norms are so everywhere that one might be tempted to consider them as simple rational. Most civilizations use laws to implement widely accepted moral standards and legal rules. It is important to know that ethics and law are not the same. An act may be lawful but immoral/unethical or unlawful but moral/ethical.

There are a number of reasons why it is essential to stick to ethical norms in conducting research. First, is to support the aims of research, such as knowledge, truth, and avoidance of error. For example, preventions of fabricating, falsifying, or misrepresenting research data support the truth and avoid error. Second, ethical standards promote the values that are vital to collaborative work, such as trust, accountability, joint respect, and fairness since research usually involves cooperation and coordination among many researchers in a mixture of disciplines and institutions. For example, many ethical standards in research, such as copyright, patenting policies, data sharing policies, and confidentiality rules in peer review, are deliberate to protect intellectual property interests as well as encouraging collaboration. Third, some ethical norms help to guarantee that researchers can be held responsible to the public. For instance, federal policies on research misconduct, conflicts of interest, the human subjects’ protections, and animal care and use are necessary in order to make sure that researchers who are funded by public money can be held accountable to the public. Fourth, ethical norms in research also help to build community support sustainability for research. Fifth, many of the ethical standards of research promote a variety of other moral and social values, such as human rights, animal welfare and compliance with the law, health and safety. Ethical descends in research can significantly harm the whole society and animal subjects. For example, a researcher who fabricates data in a clinical trial may harm or even kill patients. Also a researcher who fails to stand for guidelines and regulations relating to radiation or biological safety may endanger health and safety of himself, staff and students.

Key words: ethics, moral, research, standards, values.

Introduction

Rules and ethics for funded research projects is very common world wide. Research is usually funded by professional agencies such as governments, universities, national and international institutions. Famous examples are United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (UN). The general ethical principals that usually addressed by many agencies as part of their code of research ethics include, honesty, objectivity, integrity, intellectual property, confidentiality, publications, competence, human privacy and dignity and many others principles (Shamoo and Resnik, 2009). Codes, guidelines, and principals are useful and crucial, however, they often conflict, and they require substantial interpretation. It is therefore important for researchers to learn how to interpret, assess, and apply various research rules and how to make decisions and to act in various situations. The vast majority of decisions involve the straightforward application of ethical rules (Resnik, 2008).

Honesty:

Do not betray others, such as granting organizations, contemporaries, generation and community by reporting untrue, fabricated, distorted and misrepresented data. Honesty is to do our best for truthfulness in reporting experimental procedures as well as results of research conducted. Be open for criticism, disapproval as
well as appreciation and praise. Examine your research results critically and keep your data for further checking. Observe and comply with relevant institutional rules and regulations as well as governmental strategies and policies (Louis Garrick, 2010/11).

Objectivity:

Reveal individual or economic interests that may influence research and keep away from unfairness and dishonesty in all aspects where objectivity is mandatory such as design of experiments, data analysis and interpretation, review of literature, others contributions. Be fair in showing expert evidence and verification and all objectivity features.

Integrity:

Perform with realness, authenticity and genuineness; continue your promises and conformity, struggle for reliability, steadiness and consistency of thought and deeds. Strive to avoid careless mistakes.

Intellectual Property:

Do respect the intellectual properties such as copyrights, patents, etc. Avoid using unpublished data, methods, or results without legal permission and do not use illegally. Acknowledge or credit for all other types of contributions to the achievements research.

Publication:

Stay away from reproduction of publication and extravagant. The aim of responsible publication is to move on for advance research and learning, not to progress your own career. Other aim of publication is to encourage other researchers (students) to benefit, build up confidence, and be able to make their own judgment and choices (Shamoo and Resnik, 2002).

Competence:

Seize chances to uphold capability and competency in knowledge and science as a whole through lifelong learning, which may help to improve your profession as expertise in your field.

Human Privacy and Dignity (Resnik, 1999)

There are many aspects should be taken into consideration if the conducted research is related to human subjects:
1- Respect human privacy, dignity and independence
2- Maximize benefits
3- Minimize harms and risks
4- Take precautions with vulnerable (helpless) populations
5- Strive to share out the benefits and/or burden of research literally.
6- Report an undesirable event in a human research experiments

Ethical related issues in Research:

There are many activities that consider as unethical. These are look upon as deviations from ethical research practices or what so called ethical dilemmas, which may include:
1. Filing a patent without informing associates and collaborators, so only one single author appears as inventor, especially if collaborators are students.
2. Adding a friend as an author on a paper in return for a favor even though he didn’t contribute to the research work or to the paper. Or the dean, director or head of department is named as an author on every paper that comes from his faculty, institute or department, respectively, even if he/she does not make any contribution.
3. Modify statistical technique to enhance the significance of your research. Or torturing the data to get the significance. Garnishing or trimming outliers from a data set without discussing your reasons.
4. Purposely ignoring to acknowledge the contributions of other researchers in the same field or any other relevant previous work in your review of the literature.
5. Publishing the same research project into two different scientific journals using different languages. Or using same language with such modifications that are not significant.
6. Fixing and fabricating an experiment in such a way that you know how it will produce.
7. Exploiting graduates or post-doctoral researchers in doing the hard work and ignore them in publications, or even not acknowledge their efforts. (Steen, 2011)
8. Promising a student a better grade for favors in return such as money, sex, …
9. Violation of bio-safety rules and regulations, which may exposes other researchers, students and staff to biological risks.
10. As reviewer, accepting or rejecting a manuscript for publication after fast general reading or without even reading it.
11. Intentionally stretching the truth and overestimating the significance of the research findings to convince others so as to obtain such benefit (economic, promotion, social, political, etc.)
12. Many issues could be added under ethical dilemmas (Resnik, 1999).

Ethical Evidence:

It is crucial for researchers to find out how to understand, read between the lines, assess, and apply various research rules and regulations and know how to make decisions and to take the right ethical action in various conditions.

The one who makes a decision in an ethical dilemma should be able to rationalize the decision to him / herself, as well as others who might be concerned or affected by the decision. Also one should able to articulate causes and reasons to explain how and why such decision.

As Muslims any sort of cheating, plagiarism, dishonesty and unethical acts are absolutely forbidden as if committed sins and disobeying Allah (S.W.T.). There are so many evidences in the holy Qura’an as well as hadeeth by apostle of Allan Mohammad (PBUH). Allah S.W.T says in Surah An-Nahl (216: 105):

إِنَّمَا يَقْرِبُ الْقَبْلَ الَّذِينَ لاَ يَعْمَلُونَ بِالْحَقِّ وَأُولُوكَهُمُ الْكَفَّارُونَ

The translation of this phrase is:

{It is only those who believe not in the Ayât (proofs, evidence, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) of Allâh, who fabricate falsehood, and it is they who are liars.}

Lying or telling other than the fact is Haram as stated in many parts of the holy Qura’an as well as in hadeeth “Sunnah” on prohibition of lying for example the ayah in surah Al-Israa 17: 36:

وَلَا تَفْلَقِّ الْمَمْلُوكَةَ مِنْ لُكَّ وَلَأُولُوكَ فَأَيُّهَا الْيَهُودُ كَانَ عَلَى مَسْتَوَى وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا قَالُوا مَا لَنَا مِنْهُمَّ

This could be translated as:

“And pursue not that of which thou hast no knowledge; for every act of hearing, or of seeing, or of (feeling in) the heart will be enquired into (on the Day of Reckoning).”

Or

“And go not thou after that where of thou hast no knowledge verily the hearing and the sight and the heart, each of these shall be asked about.”

As Muslims we should fear Allah in everything that we are doing or going to do because Allah says in sorah Al-Fajr 89: 14:

إنْ رَبُّكَ يَا لَيْكِمْ مَسَاءً

That means: (Verily, your Lord is ever watchful (over them)).

There are so may Hadeeth by Allah’s Apostle Mohammad (Peace be Upon Him) warning Muslims from cheating and telling lies.

Narrated 'Abdullah bin 'Umar:

A man mentioned to the Prophet that he had always been cheated in bargains. The Prophet said, “Whenever you do bargain, say, No cheating.”

And also a famous Hadeeth tells that Allah’s Apostle (PBUH) said:

“Whoever deceives is not of us”

وَعَنْ أَبِي هِرِيْرَةُ رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ أَنْ رَسُولَ اللهُ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: “أَيْتَ عَلَمَاءَ رَبِّيَّةَ ثَلَاثَةٌ: إِذَا حَدَّثَ كَنَّب، وَإِذَا عُفِّيَ كَنَّب، وَإِذَا أَحْتَمَّ

The translation of this is: Signs of the hypocrite are three: when he makes a promise he breaks it and if he breaks

Consider some cases

Case 1: German defense chief quits over plagiarism row - World - GMA News, 2 Mar 2011. Bundesbank President Axel Weber, seen as a top contender to lead the ...Aquino takes swipe at SC over plagiarism issue 2010-11-20 00:48:32 : www.gmanews.tv› World › Europe.

Case 2: One master student did a good research, however couldn’t defend his research findings properly during the viva. Such argument by the student following Nabi Musa (Peace be upon him) that he asked Allah (S.W.T.) to allow his brother Haroon to help him because haroon can talk better as well as he has an eloquent language.
What should be the judgment and decision to be taken by the examination committee? Should the student pass or fail or given another chance for re-viva?

Case 3: After your article has been accepted for publication, you discovered an error, which does not affect the overall results of your research findings, however it is likely misleading. The article has just gone to press; as a result it is too late to correct the error before it appears in print. What will be your ethical resolution?

Case 4: About openness and sharing the data. As principal investigator you have just published a paper in a prestigious high impact factor journal and you are planning to publish many other papers from your dataset. You received a request from another research team that wants access to your complete dataset. They show you that they are interested in examining such relationship between other variables that you are planning to conduct a study on almost the same topic. What shall be the choice (priority) as one hand, the ethical norm of openness obliges you to share data with the other research team. On the other hand, if you share data with the other team, they may publish results that you are planning to publish.

Conducting a course or courses in research ethics may help reduce the rate of severe divergence by humanizing the researcher’s understanding of ethics. Sometimes deviation from ethical behavior occurs in research as a result of ignorance or a failure to reflect seriously on such traditions.

References


The holy Qura’an.

http://www.gmanews.tv › World › Europe.