

ETHICS IN MANAGEMENT RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

It is impossible to undertake Management Research without a consideration of effects of that research upon the people concerned. Thus, we need to consider our own ethical position as a starting point because that will affect both the nature of data collection and the way in which we set about analyzing that data and building theory from it. Management academics have tended to rely on ethics codes developed by social researchers in related fields to inform their research practice. The point of this paper is to question whether this remains a viable approach in the current climate that is characterized by a significant increase in ethical regulation across the social sciences? Many of us may be wondering why we are required to have training in research ethics. We may believe that we are highly ethical and know the difference between right and wrong. We would never fabricate or falsify data or plagiarize. Indeed, We also may believe that most of our colleagues are highly ethical and that there is no ethics problem in research. Management research requires that researcher explicitly understand their own values, examine and clarify traditions, perspectives, social process, values and attitude of self and others. This paper looks at the importance of ethical in management research.

Keywords : Management Research, Ethics

INTRODUCTION:

Research means a systematic investigation, including research development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge. When most people think of ethics (or morals), they think of rules for distinguishing between right and wrong, such as the Golden Rule ("Do unto others as you would have them do unto you"), a code of professional conduct like the Hippocratic Oath ("First of all, do no harm"), a religious creed like the Ten Commandments ("Thou Shalt not kill..."), or a wise aphorisms like the sayings of Confucius. This is the most common way of defining "ethics": norms for conduct that distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behavior.

Most people learn ethical norms at home, at school, in church, or in other social settings. Although most people acquire their sense of right and wrong during childhood, moral development occurs throughout life and human beings pass through different stages of growth as they mature. Although management researchers have taken considerable interest in the codes of ethics used by other professional groupings to regulate their behaviour, including, business associations public relations and marketing executives far less attention has been devoted to the role of ethics in the conduct of management research.

The purpose of this article is to inform and encourage the research community to debate and reflect on the ethical standards to which we voluntarily adhere with respect to the conduct of Management research. Ethics in business are nothing but the do's and don'ts by the business users in the business. In other words it could be referred as set of principles a business man ought to follow. "There should be business ethics" means that the business should be conducted according to certain self recognized moral standards. Few unethical elements in the present day business are cheating, stealing, lying, bribing, corrupting etc. Research ethics can be defined as the application of moral principles 'in planning, conducting, and reporting the results of research studies. The fundamental moral standards involved focus on what is right and what is wrong'

Although codes, policies, and principals are very important and useful, like any set of rules, they do not cover every situation, they often conflict, and they require considerable 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. Setting the ethical standards for the way of doing business in corporation is primarily task of management.

Ethics can be defined as a process of evaluating actions according to moral principal of values (A.Alhemoud). Throughout the centuries people were trying to choose between profit and moral. Perhaps, some of them obtain both, but every time it could have roused ethical issues. Those issues concern fairness, justice, rightness or wrongness; as a result it can only be resolved according to ethical standards.

OBJECTIVES:

The main objective of this study is 1) to raise researcher awareness of ethics in management research by reviewing a range of ethical issues that researcher may encounter during the life of research project. 2) To assist researcher to appreciate the source and depth of ethical and moral thinking, views and attitudes enabling them to reach well-founded decision. 3) To provide the guidance and a pathway to resolving ethical dilemmas that researcher may encounter during the research.

CODES AND POLICIES FOR MANAGEMENT RESEARCH ETHICS:

Given the importance of ethics for the conduct of research, it should come as no surprise that many different professional associations, government agencies, and universities have adopted specific codes, rules, and policies relating to research ethics.

The following is a rough and general summary of some ethical principals that various codes address:

1. HONESTY:

Strive for honesty in all scientific communications. Honestly report data, results, methods and procedures, and publication status. Do not fabricate, falsify, or misrepresent data. Do not deceive colleagues, granting agencies, or the public.

2. OBJECTIVITY:

Strive to avoid bias in experimental design, data analysis, data interpretation, peer review, personnel decisions, grant writing, expert testimony, and other aspects of research where objectivity is expected or required. Avoid or minimize bias or self-deception. Disclose personal or financial interests that may affect research.

3. INTEGRITY:

Keep your promises and agreements; act with sincerity; strive for consistency of thought and action.

4. CAREFULNESS:

Avoid careless errors and negligence; carefully and critically examine your own work and the work of your peers. Keep good records of research activities, such as data collection, research design, and correspondence with agencies or journals.

5. OPENNESS:

Share data, results, ideas, tools, resources. Be open to criticism and new ideas.

6. RESPECT FOR INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY:

Honor patents, copyrights, and other forms of intellectual property. Do not use unpublished data, methods, or results without permission. Give credit where credit is due. Give proper acknowledgement or credit for all contributions to research. Never plagiarize.

7. CONFIDENTIALITY:

Protect confidential communications, such as papers or grants submitted for publication, personnel records, trade or military secrets, and patient records.

8. RESPONSIBLE PUBLICATION:

Publish in order to advance research and scholarship, not to advance just your own career. Avoid wasteful and duplicative publication.

9. RESPONSIBLE MENTORING:

Help to educate, mentor, and advise students. Promote their welfare and allow them to make their own decisions.

10. RESPECT FOR COLLEAGUES:

Respect your colleagues and treat them fairly.

11. SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY:

Strive to promote social good and prevent or mitigate social harms through research, public education, and advocacy.

12. NON-DISCRIMINATION:

Avoid discrimination against colleagues or students on the basis of sex, race, ethnicity, or other factors that are not related to their scientific competence and integrity.

13. COMPETENCE:

Maintain and improve your own professional competence and expertise through lifelong education and learning; take steps to promote competence in science as a whole.

14. LEGALITY:

Know and obey relevant laws and institutional and governmental policies.

15. HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTECTION:

When conducting research on human subjects minimize harms and risks and maximize benefits; respect human dignity, privacy, and autonomy; take special precautions with vulnerable populations; and strive to distribute the benefits and burdens of research fairly.

IMPORTANCE:

There are several reasons why it is important to adhere to ethical norms in research. First, norms promote the aims of research, such as knowledge, truth, and avoidance of error. For example, prohibitions against fabricating, falsifying, or misrepresenting research data promote the truth and avoid error. Second, since research often involves a great deal of cooperation and coordination among many different people in different disciplines and institutions, ethical standards promote the values that are essential to collaborative work, such as trust, accountability, mutual respect, and fairness. For example, many ethical norms in research, such as guidelines for authorship, copyright and patenting policies, data sharing policies, and confidentiality rules in peer review, are designed to protect intellectual property interests while encouraging collaboration. Most researchers want to receive credit for their contributions and do not want to have their ideas stolen or disclosed prematurely. Third, many of the ethical norms help to ensure that researchers can be held accountable to the public. For instance, federal policies on research misconduct, conflicts of interest, the human subject's protection, 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 public support for research. People more likely to fund the research project if they can trust the quality and integrity of research. Finally, many of the norms of research promote a variety of other important moral and social values.

IMPLICATIONS:

This article has analysed the content of ethics codes used in social research to discern similarities and differences in the way they deal with specific ethical principles, highlighting the influence of tone in determining how these principles are interpreted. Although these codes contain ethical principles that are common to all social research, we have argued that management research takes place in a context that requires specific consideration, and this cannot be achieved through reliance on codes developed for use in other social scientific disciplines alone. The importance of an ethics code for management research is made greater by current concerns about the ethics of social research practice. The emergence of ethical governance regimes that seek to expand the definition of ethics by incorporating judgments of research quality, integrity and efficiency, in addition to dealing with more conventional ethical issues means that the need for explicit recognition of ethical issues is greater than ever so that as a community we are in a position to influence this agenda in a way which continues to allow for diversity within our field.

CONCLUSION:

This article has analysed the content of ethics codes used in management research to discern similarities and differences in the way they deal with specific ethical principles, highlighting the influence of tone in determining how these principles are interpreted. Although these codes contain ethical principles that are common to all Management research, we have argued that management research takes place in a context that requires specific consideration, and this cannot be achieved through reliance on codes developed for use in other social scientific disciplines alone. The importance of an ethics code for management research is made greater by current concerns about the ethics of social research practice.

Ethics is an important facet of any research methodology in any discipline. Wherever there are researchers, stakeholders, affected parties... there will exist the potential for an action or decision to impair or enhance the well-being of one or more persons. The intention of this essay is to encourage preventative ethical practice. To this end, researchers need to pay special attention to ethical issues in the initial stages of a research design. In many cases, ensuring that both the goal and the means used to achieve it are admirable will obviate many of the subsequent ethical concerns that could otherwise arise. Finally, ethics is a matter of individual values, judgment and conscience. Nevertheless, research (and the ethical values that inform it) will be judged by the collective values, judgments and consciences of many other researchers. The ethics of the review process lies outside the scope of this essay, but it represents a clear way forward for the ethically concerned researcher-reviewer.

CLOSING THOUGHTS!

“Reputation is one of those things that take a lifetime to build and only one bad decision to destroy.”

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