

Chapter 30

Ensuring Research Integrity: An Overview

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ABSTRACT

Ethics is the study of man's internalization of his understanding of terms such as value, dignity, integrity, fairness, justice, and care among others. These terms are relevant to man in his private as well as public life, in official and unofficial settings. Man must realize that he interacts with others either on one-on-one basis or through other materials, which include recorded voice, written documents, speeches made, interviews granted, and the like. He must take cognizance of his sense of morality therefore or become immoral, that is using people solely to achieve his purpose, or worse still degenerate to being amoral. Where a researcher is indifferent to the impact of his work on others, his research base or benefactors, he is an egoist. In order to assist the researcher, journalist, teacher, etc. every organization, institute, corporation, etc. must have laid down rules generally referred to as "code of conduct." These must be binding on all members, serving as a guide to members' behaviors in their day-to-day interactions.

INTRODUCTION

Discussion in this chapter will focus on the branch of philosophy that is practical and touches on man's day-to-day activities. Philosophy is broadly made up of four branches, these being:

1. Epistemology, which is the study of the source and theory of knowledge,
2. Metaphysics, which is concerned with all that is beyond the physical,
3. Logic, which deals with systematic and valid reasoning processes, and
4. Ethics, which is an offshoot of man's metaphysical notions.

Ethics, in simple terms, is defined as the aspect of philosophy that deals with moral principles (Ethics, n.d.). Elaborating on this further, ethics is said to be "primarily concerned with attempting to define what is good for the individual and for society. It also tries to establish the nature of obligations,

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-8057-7.ch030

or duties that people owe themselves and each other” (Softkey Multimedia, 1997). Ethics here implies that an individual’s actions must be judged to be right both by the actor as well as his society that is, the other(s). Ethics consist of sub sets such as normative, meta-ethics and applied ethics. For the purpose of this work however, our focus shall be on applied ethics as it relates to research.

Applied ethics is concerned with particular, actual ethical situations that people in the concrete world encounter. The applied ethicist is one that is concerned with “situations that have real, practical import” (Haramia, n.d.). Here, the philosopher relates “philosophical concern, particularly in ethics, to real life” situations (Midgley, 2003, p. 127). This is because ethics is concerned with or teaches man what is the right thing to do, what is the good, by attending to what is the case thereby increasing his understanding of reality (Midgley, 2003, p. 130). Ethics is the philosopher’s attempt to dissolve the distinction between fact and value insisting that “if you had a full appreciation of reality you would come to know what” the right thing is (Midgley, 2003, p. 130). For ethics interacts directly with man in his day to day activities. It is relevant in a person’s private and public life as it is the embodiment of man’s value system in relation to his motives, thoughts and actions. Ethics is the ever present but silent “judge” of a person, declaring “that something, person or situation is good or bad, that some action ought or ought not to be done” (Bullock & Trombley, 1999, p. 904). This is because in some instances, ethical implications or value conclusions may not be constructed with words such as good, bad, right, wrong, ought and ought not.

The constituents of research as an activity and its goals will also be considered herewith. This is to assist us in understanding the place of ethics in our research endeavors and avoid the pitfalls therewith. This would further help us not to disappoint our research base or those that hold us and our claims in high esteem.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH AND ITS COMPONENTS

Research is the systematic investigation into and study of materials and resources with the intent to establish facts and reach new conclusions (English Oxford Dictionary, 2017). The implication is that there is an existing form of knowledge on every subject matter. Research is to review or compliment knowledge previously existing. Research can also be called inquiry. Research takes various forms such as investigation, experimentation, testing, exploration, analysis, fact finding, examination, scrutiny, probing, scrutinization of available materials, for the purpose of establishing of facts and or arriving at new conclusions. This is why sometimes research is carried out by way of inspections, review of existing materials and assessing existing materials which include but not limited to historical, archeological and scientific findings. Hence, Wikipedia (Research, n.d.) defines research as a “creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of humans, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications”. This implies that the intent of a true research is to add value to existing knowledge. The Business Dictionary (2015) thus defines research as the “systematic investigative process employed to increase or revise current knowledge by discovering new facts”. It is consequently expected that research must almost at all times lead to a more robust understanding of previous knowledge or its revision.

There are basically two types of research methods embarked on by researchers namely qualitative and quantitative. Quantitative research has as its starting point some pre-conceived ideas generally referred to as hypotheses. A hypothesis is a question rising from observations made over a period of time about a phenomenon that demands answers. The main thrust of this research is its utilization of the philosophical

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