

Chapter 1

Ethics in Case Studies: Navigating the Complexities of Qualitative Research

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ABSTRACT

This chapter provides a comprehensive exploration of ethics in case studies, emphasizing the importance of contextualizing ethics in qualitative research. It delves into fundamental ethical principles, such as respect for human dignity and informed consent, while addressing specific complexities encountered in fields like finance and family businesses. Guiding principles such as transparency and integrity are articulated, ensuring an ethical approach that respects participants' rights. Practical strategies for navigating ethical challenges, including developing ethical protocols and consulting experts, are proposed, fostering responsible and respectful qualitative research practices that uphold integrity and trust in scientific inquiry.

INTRODUCTION

Qualitative research is a methodological approach aimed at exploring the intricate meanings, motivations, and experiences of individuals within their natural contexts. Unlike quantitative methods, which focus on numerical data collection and analysis, qualitative research emphasizes understanding social and human phenomena in their full complexity. Ethics play a paramount role in guiding the responsible and

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respectful conduct of researchers towards study participants and their environments (Orb et al., 2001).

Ethical considerations in qualitative research encompass several essential dimensions. Firstly, they necessitate respect for the rights and dignity of participants. Researchers must ensure the free and informed consent of participants, along with the protection of their confidentiality and personal data. Moreover, ethical conduct involves transparency in communicating research objectives and methods and a commitment to minimizing potential harm to participants (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005).

Furthermore, the ethics of qualitative research are intrinsically linked to the values and standards of the scientific community. Researchers are bound by codes of conduct established by academic institutions and research ethics committees (Drolet et al., 2023). This adherence to principles of methodological rigor, intellectual integrity, and social responsibility ensures the ethical conduct of research (Ciuk & Latusek, 2018).

Ethical considerations are also influenced by the specific issues related to various fields of study. For instance, researchers in the health sciences must address complex issues concerning participant vulnerability and the potential impact of research on their well-being (Drolet et al., 2023). Similarly, researchers in the social sciences and humanities must contemplate the ethical implications of their work on the studied communities and society at large. Thus, contextualizing ethics in qualitative research demands an acute awareness of the values, principles, and standards guiding ethical conduct (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012). This implies a steadfast commitment to respecting participant rights and dignity, maintaining transparency in research communication, and adhering to established codes of conduct (Orb et al., 2001).

The significance of ethics in case studies lies in ensuring respect for the rights, dignity, and well-being of participants while maintaining the validity and credibility of research outcomes. As a qualitative approach, case studies often involve deep immersion in the participants' context and lives, making ethical considerations even more crucial. Firstly, ethics in case studies are essential to secure informed consent (Rendtorff, 2015). Given that case studies can include in-depth interviews, prolonged observations, and intrusive data collection, it is imperative that participants fully understand the research objectives, methods employed, and potential risks, and provide informed consent (Ciuk & Latusek, 2018).

Secondly, ethics are critical for protecting participant confidentiality and privacy. Case studies often reveal sensitive information about individuals' lives and experiences, necessitating meticulous data management and guaranteed anonymity when possible. Researchers must ensure that participants' personal data are secure and accessible only to authorized research team members (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012).

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