

Ethical Dilemmas in Social Science Research: Case Studies and Solutions

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This chapter discusses social science researchers' ethical dilemmas as scientists and social agents. Social scientists must provide correct data and ethical issues arising from their involvement in social movements or politically sensitive situations. Insufficient studies have examined how researchers manage ethical issues in practice, especially when their findings contradict existing structures or affect disadvantaged people. This article examines how deontological, utilitarian, and virtue ethics apply to real-world ethical situations. Our findings show that research ethics must balance scientific rigor and ethical responsibility. The chapter suggests that researchers need stronger frameworks and training to overcome ethical issues and

ensure research integrity and social relevance. These findings join conversations on ethical research practices and their effects on study validity and researcher and participant well-being.

INTRODUCTION TO ETHICAL DILEMMAS IN SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

1.1 The Ethical Tensions in Social Science Research

The intricate interaction between researchers' dual responsibilities as scientific investigators and social agents raises ethical issues in social science research (Drolet et al., 2023; Brown and colleagues, 2020; Sartoretto & Custódio, 2020). Social scientists are dedicated to revealing and presenting factual information from meticulous empirical data. Nevertheless, their obligations extend beyond that; they are also expected to behave in manners that mirror the ideals and standards of society. These double responsibilities give rise to inherent conflicts, particularly when researchers are engaged in social movements or work in politically delicate settings. For instance, they may have ethical quandaries concerning their moral responsibilities to reveal certain facts that could harm particular groups or maintain the privacy of susceptible populations. Moreover, ethical quandaries frequently arise when researchers' discoveries question established political and economic systems, suggesting their involvement in processes of social regulation (Bhatt, 2022; Hota et al., 2023; Williams et al., 2020). These ethical dilemmas are theoretical and have significant consequences for the probity of social science research and the personal integrity of the researchers.

Social science research, which centers on human behavior, social systems, and cultural contexts, possesses intrinsic ethical challenges due to its distinctive nature (Bhatt, 2022; Pritchett et al., 2022; Henrickson et al., 2020). Furthermore, the field's epistemological focus on comprehending social realities influenced by power dynamics and methods of social control intensifies this complexity.

Ethical quandaries have become increasingly prominent in modern circumstances, especially in the years after the events of 9/11. Academic researchers may encounter ethical dilemmas when selecting research subjects that may result in adverse outcomes, employing potentially misleading or intrusive techniques, and managing the unexpected repercussions of their research discoveries. When the research overlaps with heightened security concerns or involves politically heated themes, these dilemmas become very difficult to resolve since the boundaries between ethical research practice and societal control become invisible. Hence, social scientists face a com-

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