



Description

Research ethics is the essential code of conduct that governs academic research. It is a set of norms that define acceptable behavior. Unethical behavior often affects [academic publishing](#). For instance, researchers may [publish falsified data](#). However, many groups are now promoting research ethics. So how does one maintain ethical conduct in academic research?

Ethics is Essential

Ethical research first requires honesty. This means that researchers should not [falsify or misrepresent data](#). Each researcher must clearly report their data as is including the methods and results even if they are not favorable. They should not at any point change the data in order to deceive colleagues, funders, or the public.

Linked to honesty is objectivity. Studies must be designed to [minimize bias](#). Researchers must also actively [avoid bias](#) in data analysis and interpretation as well. Any personal or financial interests should be disclosed along with the research. This will alert readers to any potential influences that may have affected your work.

In addition, all animals used in the research must be properly cared for. Experiments should be designed well. This means that the design must be statistically sound. This will help researchers to use only the number of animals that is necessary. A thorough literature search should be done to avoid repeating animal studies. It is wasteful to experiment on animals if conclusive published data exists.

When humans are the subjects of research they must be treated well. Every effort must be taken to minimize risks and maximize benefits. At every point, the rights to autonomy, privacy, and dignity must be respected. Special care must be taken when working with vulnerable populations.

Some believe that bad researchers behave unethically. The alternate theory says that misconduct happens because of external factors. These include the pressure to publish or win grants, incentives, or constraints. Misconduct can also occur because of poor supervision, career ambitions, or the pursuit of fame. Every researcher will face pressure at one time or another. What is the best way to ensure that they do the right thing?

Promoting Institutional Ethical Behavior

Ethical conduct is essential in inspiring trust. When scientists abide by research ethics, their work is trustworthy. Academic research institutions often wish to encourage their staff to behave ethically.

Institutions can promote ethical behavior by having formal and informal research ethics education. Formal education will expose researchers to ethical standards and policies. Using real-world examples [can teach researchers](#) about the importance and consequences of alternate responses to an ethical dilemma. Public discussions in an ethics course may discourage unethical behavior. This happens because participants talk about the potential harm that can result.

Institutions [should do a few things](#) to teach faculty and students research ethics.

- Use specific examples as much as possible in the course. This is the best way to provide guidance.
- Encourage more ethical behavior. There should be opportunities for experts to explain why certain ethical practices exist.
- Use non-science fields to assist with rethinking controversial issues. Studies in moral philosophy or the social studies of science may help.
- Chosen topics that are intellectually stimulating. They may be in a specific ethics course or part of a more general course.
- Discuss institutional codes of conduct. This will help make everyone aware of what acceptable behavior is. It will also help staff and students learn how to address or report a breach of ethics.
- Share and discuss unique ethical dilemmas among researchers. These talks should help them find the best ways to promote research ethics in their own niches.

Guidelines for Ethical Conduct

Fortunately, there are ethical guidelines available for various disciplines. For example, HEART has issued [an ethics statement](#) for publishers. (HEART is a group of editors of major cardiovascular journals). Medical laboratory staff can learn from [the American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science's code of ethics](#). Professors may adhere to the [American Association of University Professors' professional ethics statement](#).

Research ethics can be a very tricky subject. Ethical conduct is essential to researchers being trustworthy. Many institutions are now promoting research ethics. Academic research and academic publishing only have value when researchers behave ethically. You can get detailed guidance on the ethics of working with people here. Furthermore, if you are thinking about implementing an ethics course, you can read this for more tips.

Why do you think it is important for researchers to behave ethically during their research project? Please let us know your thoughts in the comments below!

Category

1. Publishing Research

2. Understanding Ethics

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