Ethics Regulations and Procedures for Human Subjects Research

Ivcher School of Psychology

IDC Herzliya
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Preface

Dear Researcher,

Psychology studies are meant to promote scientific knowledge of human behavior. Thus naturally they involve researchers, research assistants, and human participants, and might deal with sensitive topics. Therefore, maintaining ethical principles that will protect the mental and physical health of all the people involved in research is vital. In this guide, you will find an explanation of the ethical principles that guide researchers at the School of Psychology at the IDC Herzliya. Following this guide is obligatory for planning and conducting every research project.

Wishing you a productive and successful research experience,

The Ethics Committee
Dr. Guy Hochman
Prof. Eran Halperin
Prof. Gilad Hirschberger
Prof. Shahar Ayal
Introduction

Conducting research is meant to advance human knowledge and further important goals. The principles of ethics are meant to describe the ideals of how research is supposed to be conducted professionally, and they are inseparable from the scientific and methodological components of the study. The goals of the ethical principles are not to make research unnecessarily difficult or prevent research from happening, but to strengthen the research itself. In this document, you can find the specific principles of the Baruch Ivcher School of Psychology.

Terms:

Research – A project that sets clear scientific goals such as understanding of physiological, psychological, or social phenomenon, or evaluating treatments that aim to diagnose, prevent, or treat disorders. The educational research could include the following procedures: observation, systematic manipulations in the lab, distributing questionnaires, performing psychological assessments, checking personal files, or any past collected data, etc. The term research also includes the way to preserve and publish any collected data.

Researcher - Any person who performs research and is associated with the IDC Herzliya as an employee, faculty member, or student.

Participant - any person who has agreed to assist in the study by participating (also known as a subject), and about whom the researcher obtains information by performing any procedure for the purposes of the research.
Basic Principles

1. Truth
The researchers are interested in expanding human knowledge about the world, in deepening human understanding of its aspects, and in improving human ability to use this knowledge to achieve vital human goals or worthy social goals. The researchers serve these goals when they operate according to scientific psychology research methods and the behavioral rules of the scientific community as a whole.

2. Freedom
The researchers will carry out their study with a maximum amount of independence from foreign influences, and will respect the life of human beings and their dignity and liberty. The researchers must disclose any issue that could be seen as a conflict of interest, whether it is related to personal, professional, commercial, or financial matters, and to follow the instructions of the institution regarding this. When research is funded, the researchers must make sure that the funding is used for the purpose for which it was designated and only this.

3. Moral responsibility
The researchers are fully responsible for any research and experimental science they perform, especially for the direct influences it has on people’s lives, on their physical and mental health, wellbeing, dignity, and liberty. The researchers are held especially responsible for the direct influence of the study on subjects who participate in it. The researchers should give real attention to the considerations about the actual need for human subjects in the research that they are planning or conducting, and considerations about the lives and wellbeing of the participants, in particular to minimize the suffering that may be incurred during or after the study. The researchers should consider the possibility that the results of their scientific research might be a tool that could be used for different purposes including the researchers desired goals of benefiting humanity, but also could even be used for nefarious purposes.

4. Scientific integrity
The researcher will perform every scientific action in accordance with all requirements of the psychological scientific system, in the highest standard of the sciences. The researcher will conduct research and analyze data whether it’s their own or their peers in the strictest manner and with the necessary depth and accuracy. The researcher must present the research and its findings as is and in an accurate, honest, and fair manner.

5. Partnership
The researchers act in the framework of scientific collaboration by upholding and atmosphere of openness, mutual trust, and a willingness to help one another. The researchers must mention the relative contribution of everyone involved in the study, references to previous work, and to act according to the
rules for referencing and citing other research and other researchers’ intellectual property. The researchers must in an open manner, and with the goal of contributing to public knowledge and the scientific community by publishing their results.

6. Professional standards
The researchers will carry out the scientific work in a professional manner. The researchers must be diligent in keeping their knowledge up to date both in their field of expertise and any other field they use. The researchers must adhere to the originality of research and writing and not plagiarize results or findings as if they was their own.

7. Respect for those who participate, their benefits and protection
The basis for research on human beings is the understanding that the goal of promoting human knowledge includes promoting the benefits of human beings in general, and participants in particular, and protecting them from undesirable and unnecessary harm. According to fundamental principles of human rights, the researcher cannot discriminate on the basis of religion, sex, age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, etc., unless it is required by methodological considerations. The researchers must make sure that implementation of the research will be done with utmost diligence and respect for the dignity of the participants in the research and others (including relatives, friends, colleagues, and peers) and their privacy and broader rights. The research must be conducted so that it does not create or that it minimizes physical and mental risks for the participants and other relevant parties.
Applying Ethics Principles

1. Prevention and minimization of potential risks and harm
The researchers must assess the possible risks associated with the research, including physical injury, mental injury, harm to reputation or self-esteem or any other harm to the participants or to any other party that may be affected by the research. The researchers should minimize and eliminate as much as possible the potential harm caused by the research. If unpredictable risks arise during study, the researchers must immediately remove or minimize these risks, and in case it is necessary, stop the research. In any case, researchers must ensure that the risks and harm expected from the study are significantly less than the expected benefits from the research.

2. Informed Consent
Informed consent is one of the basic principles of any research that includes human beings; it ensures that the research participants have the ability to agree to participate in the research out of true freedom of choice without open or covert coercion, and full knowledge of the essence of the consent. In this process, the researchers inform the participants about all the relevant aspects of the research, examine whether they fully understood the information, and make sure that the participants’ consent is given in a fully voluntary manner without pressure or manipulation.

In the event that the research participant is not capable of granting consent, consent must be obtained from the legal guardian of the participant. In the event that the participants are able to understand what they will need to do, the researcher also needs to obtain their affirmative consent. This applies to minors, and people who are not legally independent.
The researchers should clarify to the participants that they have the right not to participate and/or withdraw their consent for any reason, and withdrawal of consent will not harm them in any way. Participants will not be materially, professionally, or emotionally dependent on the researchers. Participation will not be a condition for receiving benefits or rights. In cases in which there is a methodological requirement that requires that the researcher not disclose the true purpose of the study (e.g. in field studies), the researchers may, under the approval of the ethics committee, postpone the explanation of the goals of the study until the end of the study.

3. Benefits and Protection for Participants
A research that jeopardizes the participants and that might cause them physical or mental harm will not be conducted without considering how the research will benefit the participants in a real way, even if the participants will receive or have received monetary compensation for their participation. Studies, which risk humiliating or harming the participants, cannot be conducted even if participants grant their consent to participate.
The researchers must make sure that the anonymity of the participants will be maintained, and that they will not reveal any personal information that might harm them in the future. It is strictly forbidden for researchers to use the information about the private matters of the participants for reasons that are not directly related to the research. The researchers must ensure that the confidentiality of the identity and privacy of the participants is maintained. Research on minors or those who are not legally independent should be done in the direct or indirect presence of their guardians or other adults with the appropriate authority.

4. Use of deception or concealing information from participants

Research that in its very nature requires a lack of knowledge from the participant and are dependent on the element of surprise, secrecy, or deception require an approval of the ethics committee. Regardless of this approval, the researchers should strive to minimize concealment and deception as much as possible, and consider whether the potential research conclusions require and justify deceiving the participants. The researchers will not hide information or mislead participants regarding potential physical or mental harm during the research. The researchers must reveal and explain to the participants in the research about deception or concealment that was a part of the study as soon as possible, and not later than at the end of the experiment period, and will allow the participants to withdraw from the research after they have received this information.
Institutional Ethics Committee

All research involving human beings requires an approval from the Institutional Ethics Committee before starting data collection. Submission of a request to the Institutional Ethics Committee shall be done by filling out the standard application form for Ethics Committee and after sending an email to the School Ethics Coordinator.

The School Ethics Committee has four main goals:
1. To promote the education and awareness of ethical principles in school research.
2. To review research proposals and to consider if they meet the ethical research standards as well as propose corrections and ask for any additional information that might enhance the ethics of the research.
3. To approve research proposals that meet the newest requirements for ethical research on human subjects.
4. To address ethical issues that arise during the running of studies and/or complaints from participants.

The ethics committee's approval is valid for a year from the date it was issued, unless otherwise specified. After completing this term, the researcher can submit a renewal request. In the case that there are significant changes in the way the study is conducted or in the research team, the changes must be submitted for re-approval of the committee before they are carried out.

When there are any possible threats to ethics during the research (e.g. harm to or complaints from participants), the researchers must report to this the ethics committee as soon as possible.

The researchers who are conducting the study are the ones responsible for protecting the rights of the participants according to the ethics committee regulations. It is the responsibility of the researchers to examine that beyond the principles of ethics, research is carried out within the framework of the law and within the framework of common sense. It is the Ethics Committee's task to review the research proposals submitted to it in order to assist the researchers and potential participants to act under optimal conditions and ethical procedures. The Ethics Committee's approval of research does not constitute a determination that the experiment is not against the law.