

Chapter 4

Ethical Issues in Research Conducted With the Participation of Children

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ABSTRACT

Researchers across various international contexts, sectors, and disciplines now have access to a comprehensive array of well-documented research methods and tools for engaging children in research. Much has been written about ethical issues in research involving children, with established procedures in many contexts to govern their resolution. Research involving children presents both benefits and challenges, affecting not only scientific advancements but also the well-being of children. This chapter discusses points requiring ethical sensitivity, emphasizing the importance of recognizing children as individuals and outlining how studies should be conducted. All planned work must adhere to children's rights, ensuring fairness and equity. Ethical conduct benefits children, emphasizing that children should never be harmed due to their participation in research. Informed consent is paramount, requiring researchers to respect children's autonomy.

INTRODUCTION

In the history of psychology, the beginning of ethical studies conducted with children dates back to the Nuremberg Trials (1946). As a result of the Nuremberg Trials, the Nuremberg law emerged. According to the Nuremberg law, it is important to comply with ethical rules in studies with humans (1946). The Declaration of Helsinki (1964,

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1989, 1996) particularly drew attention to studies to be carried out with children and reorganized them. According to the Declaration of Helsinki “*Adequate information must be provided to the research participants, participation in the research must be freely volunteered, with the understanding that the participant can withdraw at any time, and in addition, informed consent should be obtained, preferably in writing.*” In accordance with this declaration, it specifically states that in research conducted with children: “*permission from the responsible relative replaces that of the participant*”. However, this idea is not sufficient in terms of children’s rights. In the current form, The guidelines are clear that the consent of the child should be sought in addition to that of the responsible adult.

Research involving children is crucial for shaping the future of society, demanding a considerable degree of responsibility and sensitivity. Children have the right to be free from harm, to express their views, and to influence decisions, including the right to protection in matters concerning their own lives (Brooker, 2001).

Ethical principles guiding research involving children prioritize the protection of their health, safety, and well-being, emphasizing the responsibility of researchers. In research to be conducted with children, ethical principles are a guide that the researcher must always follow.

Ethics directs researchers to reflect on the standards they value, to work towards and justify these standards, to balance different goals, and to be accountable to child participants as well as to colleagues (Thomas & O’Kane, 1998). Ethical responsibilities focus on children’s rights, privacy, consent, and psychosocial well-being, underscoring the importance of ethical considerations in research processes.

Pyle (2013) identifies three primary challenges when working with children: developmental appropriateness, language barriers, and power imbalances between adults and children. This section discusses fundamental considerations in research involving children, emphasizing the need to prioritize children’s protection and interests. The study serves as a guide for future researchers, educators, and professionals, emphasizing the importance of an ethical approach when working with children.

Ethics Committee Approval

Regardless of the research topic, it is necessary to obtain permission from the ethics committee for research involving infants and children. Obtaining ethics committee approval is only the beginning of the process of conducting research with children. In this process, permission from parents and consent from children are required (Freeman & Mathison, 2009).

When obtaining ethics committee permission, the purpose and benefit of the study should be explained, and information should be provided regarding all materials and

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