


Chapter 8

Ethical Principles, Challenges, and Methodological Issues in Cross-Cultural Research: Implementations, Examples, and Recommendations

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ABSTRACT

This book chapter addresses essential ethical principles in cross-cultural research and explores fundamental ethical challenges encountered in both historical and contemporary implementations, using examples. Furthermore, this book chapter evaluates what the methodological issues and challenges are in cross-cultural research such as construct and measurements equivalence and considers potential solutions and points of attention. The ethical principles, ethical difficulties encountered, methodological problems and issues addressed in this book chapter are presented in each topic, with recommendations and examples for researchers to pay attention to. This book chapter also includes a section on recommendations, and in this section, the main difficulties that cross-cultural researchers may face and possible solutions are brought to the agenda. In addition, researchers are also advised on what to pay attention to in future cross-cultural research (e.g. online research).

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INTRODUCTION

Cross-cultural research is a scientific approach to the study of cultural differences in behaviour and phenomena between two or more cultures, with an emphasis on systematic comparison. The aim of cross-cultural research is to find out about the incidence, prevalence and causes of intercultural phenomena. Simultaneously, cross-cultural research focuses on similarities and differences in values, practices, beliefs, social roles, and norms across cultures, exploring patterns of consistency and sources (Ilesanmi, 2009). Arnett (2008) hypothesised that the results of research conducted by American psychologists are based on a very small fraction of the human population, especially individuals living in the United States, rather than on a large portion of humanity worldwide. Today, factors such as the recognition that most of the research in the field of psychology and other social sciences is predominantly conducted in industrialised Western societies, the fact that research can now be conducted based on funding (e.g., The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye, research grants provided by country embassies, funding from the United Nations), the need to understand cultural and social elements in globally collaborative studies (especially in non-Western societies), and the need to make more noise with the findings obtained have led to the recognition of the importance of cross-cultural studies (Allwood & Berry, 2006; Barrette et al., 2016; Super et al., 2008).

The scope of cross-cultural research is crucial for generating significant insights into the universal cognitive mechanisms that both allow and limit human cultural diversity. By its nature, such insights cannot be achieved through studies conducted solely in a local context. Therefore, there is a need for cross-cultural studies conducted within fundamental ethical principles. However, cross-cultural research also poses a broader range of ethical challenges and concerns than many local studies. Some fundamental concerns related to cross-cultural research include making the researched group vulnerable to various issues and harms, the possibility of negative interpretations towards the research group in reporting research findings, or misinterpretations of the findings (Bishop 2008; Smith 2008). These ethical challenges are not only about managing the difficulties created by the cultures in which researchers are situated but also involve handling the complexity of cultural differences in perspectives on life and ethics (Bruno et al., 2022). Although the quality of cross-cultural research is increasing today (Matsumoto & Yoo, 2006), it is also known that there are methodological problems that researchers have to deal with.

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