

WIDENING THE SCOPE OF ETHICS IN SOCIAL RESEARCH

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Abstract

Social scientists have experienced the different phenomena of their research from different perspectives including methodological, ethical, contextual, and positional considerations. Each phenomenon that they experienced as researchers can be assessed from the perspective of interpersonal conduct because social science research is all about relational processes. Social scientists as researchers have greater responsibilities, to be honest, fair, and ethically responsible in such relational processes to ensure optimum beneficence of their research.

However, due to the existing socio-culturally, linguistically and educationally diverse social settings and human practices, the social scientists have uniquely experienced their honesty, fairness, and responsibilities in each action that they took as researchers, which could be insightful for those who are newcomers. To interpret such unique experiences and make the newcomers well aware of them, I take the question of how do social scientists experience research ethics as a researcher in different context.

Positioning myself as a relativist social practitioner, I hybridize my theoretical understanding and consider the local cosmology (Awasthi, 2004) to interpret lived experiences of the social scientists by contextualizing their responsibilities towards reality, actions towards

knowledge, and considerations towards value. To have this, I apply hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry as a roadmap of accomplishment. Due to the time of social distancing, I use a multilayered approach for interviews and protocol writing to generate the text of lived experience (van Manen, 1990). The five social scientists who accomplished ample social research in different contexts including cultural and cross-cultural are considered as means of the lived experience for this study. The interpretation of the text follows the notion of textual analogy and the thematic meaning-making process.

The study reveals the widening scopes of ethics for social research, which includes thematically the genesis of the research issue, informed interpersonal conducts, conscious actions for the state of automacy, and viability for interpersonal comfort. This study further interprets that ethics in social research is contextually contested practices (rather than practicing the set of principles) of the social scientists, which should be taken as means to make research optimum beneficial for both researchers and research participants.

Therefore, there is no 'one size fits all' (see e.g., Msoroka & Amundsen, 2017) approach to research ethics exists in the case of social research.

References

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