



Philippine Health Research  
Ethics Board

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# **A Preview of the Guidelines on Social Research**

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# Highlights of the Proposed Text

1. Title of the section
2. The use of research ethics principles
3. The incorporation of the ethics of care
4. Greater emphases on the role of the participant



Source: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/rbi/staff-students/ethics/>

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# 1. Title of the section

*“Social research covers a wide range of academic disciplines with a host of interrelated and various theoretical and methodological approaches, even within a particular field of study. The human aspect of social science research makes it a complex endeavor and may lead to differences and divergences in ethical considerations and requirements....” (Introduction)*

- ***What’s in a name?***

- “Ethical Guidelines for Health-Related Social Research” to “Ethical Guidelines for Social Research”
  - Inclusive of all kinds of research that involve human participants within the social sciences
  - Buy in from social scientists
  - Acknowledgement of the diversity of social science disciplines and their respective methods

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## 2. The use of research ethics principles

- Brief introduction to each of the principles in the context of social research
  - Beneficence and Non-maleficence in Social Research
    - “In addition to respect for persons, beneficence and non-maleficence are integral ethical principles in social research. Research with human participants should be beneficial to them and/or their community. It must have a positive risk-ratio analysis. Adequate and necessary research-related care is to be provided to participants during the course of and if necessary, after the study in order to safeguard their welfare.”
  - Justice in Social Research
    - “In a society apparently marked by injustice in various forms and degrees, it is even more important that social research be characterized by justice and contribute to human flourishing (*eudaimonia*), particularly of the disadvantaged and marginalized sectors of society.”

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## 2. The use of research ethics principles

- Elaboration of certain provisions of the principles
  - “Obtaining informed consent needs to be seen as a process, not a single event occurring at the beginning of the research. The burden is on researchers to see to it that participants are aware that they can **refuse to participate or withdraw at any time from the research without penalty or refuse to answer a question or questions in the course of the research.** Researchers must be sensitive to the cues given by participants who may not always verbalize that they wish to withdraw from the research but who show through their actions that they are thinking twice about being participants.”
  - “**Researchers should consider the different dimensions or categories of risk, beyond the physical or medical.** The table below shows examples of risks and corresponding protection strategies that may be incorporated in a social science research protocol.”

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## 2. The use of research ethics principles

- New provisions in the proposed text
  - 16 new provisions, including the introductions to the principles
    - “It is imperative that social researchers recognize the potential and actual vulnerability of their research participants and that they care for them. Such vulnerability may prevent (prospective) participants from making a decision that is in the participants’ and/or their community’s best interests and provide voluntary informed consent....”
    - “The table below shows the various categories of potential vulnerability of research participants which are to be considered by researchers in obtaining informed consent....”
    - “Researchers ought to maintain the full confidentiality of all information and the anonymity of participants by instituting the necessary protection procedures in all research materials. ‘Participants should be informed of any potential limitations to the confidentiality of any information supplied’” (UNESCO Code of Conduct Social Science Research no. 14).
    - “Researchers should provide appropriate and just compensation to their research participants and reimburse them for reasonable research-related out of pocket expenses. If they will not be provided compensation or reimbursement, it must be explained why in the protocol and the informed consent form.”

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# 3. The incorporation of the ethics of care

- “In a study involving human subjects, *a researcher enters into a relationship with participants who are to be treated with respect, care and empathy.* This approach is fundamental in social research and incorporates at least two ethical convictions: first, that individuals have inviolable dignity and rights and hence, should each be recognized and treated as unique and autonomous, and second, that persons lacking or bereft of autonomy deserve preference and protection....”
- “... It is necessary that the researchers spend sufficient time with their participants and engage them in dialogue. They are to make them feel that they will not be taken advantage of and that a healthy researcher-participant relationship is of paramount importance in the research process. Openness and transparency in this regard are vital....”

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### 3. The incorporation of the ethics of care

- “... it is critical that researchers seriously take into account the various life-situations of participants in order to adequately and more realistically address their concerns and issues.”
- “... The determination of those risks or harms is preferably participatory, performed in consultation with participants. The result of this consultative process might necessitate changes in the research design in order to better protect human subjects.”

# 4. Greater emphases on the importance of participants

- “Research participants can be viewed, rather, as co-creators of knowledge, and researchers should undertake measures to clarify and balance the roles of all stakeholders involved in the study.”
- “... in all cases and situations, the well-being of every person takes precedence over scholarly advancement. Nothing can justify the instrumentalization of a person to develop, broaden or contribute to knowledge.”
- “While research is intended to generate new and various ways of understanding and interpreting our world, it is crucial that social research contributes to the promotion and defense of justice in its diverse manifestations in research, in one’s discipline and in one’s community. Constitutive of this task is the recognition that research participants are not mere objects of one’s study but they and/or their communities are research partners who are the researcher’s co-creators of knowledge. As partners in knowledge production, their roles must be properly acknowledged.”
- “The researcher shall inform participants of any increased levels of risks or harms as the study proceeds, and exercise the necessary prudential judgment that prevents immediate harm to them. The researcher shall also report those increased levels to the REC and await the REC’s advice prior to continuing the study.”

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# Thank you for listening!

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