



Philippine Health Research  
Ethics Board

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# **Ethical Guidelines for Internet Research**

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Consultant, NEGHR Revision – Social Science Research

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# Revisions to the title and significance of the section

	version March 2018	version 2022
Title	Ethical guidelines for research using online and digital tools	Ethical guidelines for internet research  Definitions
Recognition of significance in the current context	“Online and digital tools provide a relatively new platform...”	The internet as presenting manifold opportunities for researchers to examine human society, structures, interactions, and behavior  The <i>ubiquity</i> of the internet in individual and social lives, and contexts such as a global pandemic wherein in-person interactions are limited, make internet research more commonplace, if not necessary.

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# Specific guidelines have been expanded and elaborated:

## 1. Validity and Reliability

- a. Is the use of online tools and platforms appropriate and justified to attain the objectives of the study? Do they capture the phenomenon of interest with validity and reliability?
- b. Note availability and accessibility of the online tool, and the know-how of respondents to utilize it – these affect validity and reliability of the study
- c. Constraints in the recruitment and representativeness of the sample, given (b); issue of fair/equitable recruitment



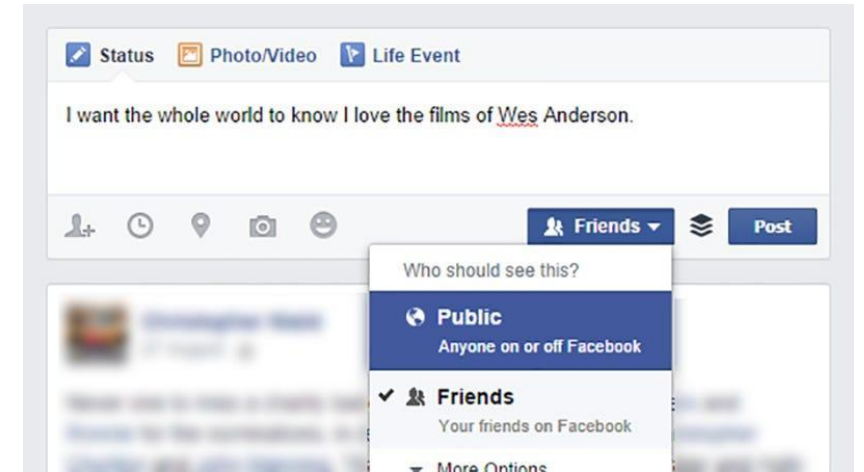
## 2. Privacy

- a. Ethical standards for maintaining data privacy must be upheld (as well as provisions of RA 10173); but recognize that the internet has made data privacy more complex
- b. How will online recruitment proceed? Note that email addresses, social media accounts, etc. are considered personal information; should not be used without consent, nor obtained from or disseminated to third parties
- c. What safeguards will be applied to ensure confidentiality of data?
  - in collecting data: what data is being obtained by the researcher & the platform / software? Understand the privacy policy of the platform and inform the respondent
  - in storage & subsequent use: e.g., encryption, anonymize if data sharing
  - in reporting: e.g., pseudonyms, modified quotes (to prevent retrieval from search engines)



## 2. Privacy, continued

- d. “Public” internet behavior (posts) may not be perceived as public by the person if they have certain expectations for privacy (i.e. that the post was for a particular audience for a particular purpose)
- may therefore require informed consent from the person or community to use posts/data (even if “public”)
    - especially if nature of the subject is sensitive and may place persons at risk if disclosed elsewhere
    - especially if identity of data source can be traced or determined
    - exceptions may be “data mining”, use of “big data”, publicly available data sets or data repositories, publicly disseminated documents or news
  - Researcher and REC must evaluate the nature of public vs private data on the internet and provide necessary ethical safeguards to protect participants



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### 3. Informed Consent Process

- a. Guidelines for obtaining voluntary informed consent apply in internet research; the same elements should be included in the informed consent information
  - with particular emphasis on data privacy: how data will be collected, stored, secured, utilized, reported
  - may be waived in accord with general guidelines for waiving consent process
- b. Obtaining informed consent by means justified by researcher and approved by the REC:
  - via electronic/digital means: digital signature on emailed document; indication of consent embedded in online survey platform (via weblink, e.g. Google Form, Qualtrics, etc.)
  - via signature on print document to be mailed or faxed or photographed
  - via recording of verbal or written consent in a video or chat platform

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### 3. Informed Consent Process, continued

- c. If consent form is self-administered (e.g. via weblink to Google Form), researcher must ensure the language is comprehensible. Must be formatted so as to enable respondent to indicate explicit consent in critical aspects of the procedures and the participants' rights.
- d. Provide avenues for prospective participants to ask questions before giving consent – for example, through the informed consent information or through contacting the researcher

## Study on Parent-Adult Child Relationships

This is a study on...provide detailed information about the study as well as other elements in an informed consent document...

 [ipalampay@ateneo.edu](mailto:ipalampay@ateneo.edu) (not shared) [Switch account](#) 

\* Required

I confirm that I have read and understood the information about the study on Parent-Adult Child Relationships. \*

Yes

No

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can withdraw my participation and/or my data any time for any reason without penalty. \*

Yes

No

I consent to being audio recorded during the online interview. \*

Yes

No

I agree to participate in the study \*

Yes

No

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## 4. Internet Research with Minors



- a. Because of constraints of online context (e.g., inability to accurately gauge non-verbal and emotional responses), limit research with minors to minimum risk
- b. Obtain consent of parent or legal guardian as well as child assent/consent (above 8 years old); take reasonable steps to validate that it is the parent/guardian providing consent
- c. Take care not to solicit information from minors that is unrelated to the study: information about other persons, personal information solicited in rapport-building, etc.





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# Thank you for your attention!

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