



Research Ethics on the Psychological and Clinical Study Targeting Children and Adolescents

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Abstract

Purpose: Psychological and clinical studies targeting children and adolescents have become increasingly important in recent years as researchers strive to understand better the psychological and physiological development of children and teens. The purpose of the study is to explore significant research ethics on the psychological and clinical study targeting children and adolescents. In addition to these ethical considerations, international and national codes of ethics and regulatory bodies guide ethical research practices with children and adolescents. **Research design, data, and methodology:** The present study used the qualitative textual collection through investigating the past and current literature review. Numerous prior studies have conducted this research design to obtain the right prior studies. **Results:** Previous Research has indicated there are four research ethics on the psychological and clinical study targeting children and adolescents. (1) Respect for autonomy, (2) Respect for privacy and confidentiality, (3) Respect for vulnerability, (4). Respect for beneficence. **Conclusions:** In conclusion, research ethics are essential for protecting children and adolescents when conducting psychological and clinical studies. In the future, research should focus on developing innovative methods to ensure the safety of children and adolescents while still allowing them to participate in research.

Keywords : Psychological and Clinical Study, Ethical Behavior, Children and Adolescents

JEL Classification Code: D91, C35, M14

1. Introduction^a

Research ethics are an integral part of the scientific process, ensuring that studies are conducted safely and ethically. It is mostly evident in psychological and clinical studies targeting children and adolescents, as the safety and privacy of these individuals must be considered. This thesis/dissertation will explore the ethical considerations of

research involving children and adolescents, including historical context, current regulations and guidelines, and potential challenges and future directions. This exploration is necessary to ensure that all studies are conducted with the utmost respect for the safety and privacy of participants while still providing meaningful and valuable data.

Psychological and clinical studies targeting children and adolescents have become increasingly important in recent

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years as researchers strive to understand better the psychological and physiological development of children and teens. These studies can involve various methods, including observational studies, surveys, interviews, and experiments, and they can focus on topics such as mental health, cognitive development, social behavior, and emotion regulation. When conducting research with children and adolescents, researchers must adhere to ethical standards to ensure the safety and well-being of the research participants (Punukollu & Marques, 2019). These standards are designed to protect the rights of the participants, ensure informed consent, and minimize any potential risks associated with the study.

Moreover, ethical considerations must be considered in order to protect their rights and welfare. These considerations include obtaining informed consent from the child or adolescent, ensuring the confidentiality of data, and assessing potential risks associated with the study. Informed consent involves providing the child or adolescent with enough information about the study to make an informed decision about participating. Confidentiality is also essential to protect the child or adolescent from potential harm due to the release of their data (Brown et al., 2020). Finally, risk assessment is necessary to ensure that the child or adolescent will not be placed in danger or harm due to participation in the study.

In addition to these ethical considerations, international and national codes of ethics and regulatory bodies guide ethical research practices with children and adolescents. These codes of ethics provide general principles to guide research, while regulatory bodies provide specific rules and regulations about conducting research with vulnerable populations. Despite these protections, potential ethical issues still need to be addressed when conducting research with children and adolescents. These include issues such as coercion, exploitation, and lack of autonomy. To ensure the ethical conduct of research with this population, researchers must be aware of these potential issues and take steps to minimize potential risks. Finally, research with children and adolescents constantly evolves, and new approaches are needed to ensure that research is conducted ethically and safely. In the future, research should focus on developing innovative methods to ensure the safety of children and adolescents while still allowing them to participate in research.

2. Literature Review

Research ethics in psychology and clinical studies involving children and adolescents is an important yet often overlooked topic. In recent years, the ethical implications of psychological research involving minors have been brought

to the forefront due to the increased accessibility of technology and the prevalence of media (Saurabh & Ranjan, 2020). These ethical implications have raised questions about researchers' moral and legal obligations and the rights of the minors they are studying. The ethical considerations of any research project involving minors must be considered in light of the particular vulnerabilities of this population. Children and adolescents are more likely to be unduly influenced by researchers' expectations and may be more susceptible to coercion and manipulation due to their lack of experience and understanding. As such, researchers must take extra measures to adhere to the minors' autonomy, dignity, and rights.

The American Psychological Association's Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct provides essential guidance for researchers on the ethical issues involved in research with minors. The code states that researchers must obtain informed consent from minors, as well as the consent of their legal guardians, before beginning any research project. Researchers must also take extra steps to protect the privacy and confidentiality of minors, as well as ensure that the research is conducted in a manner that is beneficial to the minors' well-being. In addition to the APA's principles, a growing body of literature focuses on research ethics and minors. Several studies have explored ethical considerations in research with special populations, such as vulnerable adolescents and at-risk youth. These studies have highlighted the importance of obtaining informed consent from minors and the need to provide additional safeguards for participants who may be particularly vulnerable.

According to the study (Pinquart & Ebeling, 2020), early studies on children and adolescents date back to the US' first half of the 20th century, with developmental psychologists such as John B. Watson, Arnold Gesell, and Lewis Terman researching childhood behavior and development. During this period, ethical considerations for research studies were largely absent, with researchers often failing to obtain informed consent from participants or their guardians and not addressing potential risks to the participants. Additionally, researchers often did not protect the confidentiality of their research subjects and did not adequately consider the study's potential impact on the children or their families.

In addition, early studies often ignored the potential risks associated with psychological and clinical studies on children and adolescents. These risks included physical and psychological harm and the potential for exploitation. For instance, in the 1930s, behaviorist John Watson conducted experiments on children, attempting to condition fear responses through electric shocks. This research was highly criticized for its potential to cause psychological harm to the participants.

As a result of the establishment of ethical codes of

conduct by groups like the American Psychological Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics in the second half of the 20th century, the foundation for the development of ethical standards for the psychological and clinical study of children and adolescents was laid by these early studies. These codes of conduct set out the principles of research ethics and guide how to research children and adolescents ethically. Developing ethical standards in the psychological and clinical study of children and adolescents has been long and complex. In the early 20th century, researchers often conducted studies without the subjects' or their families' knowledge or consent. This often resulted in unethical practices and a lack of respect for the autonomy of children and adolescents.

In the 1950s, the World Medical Association (WMA) began developing ethical human research standards (Parsa-Parsi, 2022). They established the Declaration of Helsinki, which set forth ethical principles for medical research involving human subjects. This declaration has been regularly revised and updated and is primarily based on the ethical principles of autonomy, beneficence, and non-maleficence. By the 1970s, the ethical standards surrounding research with children and adolescents had become more formalized and developed (Parsa-Parsi, 2022). The Belmont Report, published in 1975, outlined three fundamental moral precepts for study involving human subjects: respect for people, beneficence, and justice (Frewer, 2020). These principles laid the foundation for ethical considerations in psychological and clinical studies of children and adolescents.

In the 1970s and 1980s, research involving children and adolescents became more regulated. In 1978, the Belmont Report was issued by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research (Kuziemy et al., 2020). This report set forth the ethical principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. Since then, numerous regulatory bodies have been established to ensure the ethical conduct of research involving children and adolescents. The International Council on Harmonization (ICH) was established in 1990 to develop and harmonize standards for clinical trials. The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has also adopted guidelines for clinical research in children and adolescents. In addition, many countries have established regulations and guidelines for ethical research involving human subjects.

Informed consent is an ethical consideration for any psychological or clinical research conducted on children and adolescents (Coady, 2020). This involves the researcher providing a detailed explanation of the research study, its purpose, procedures, and potential risks, and obtaining the child or adolescent's voluntary agreement to participate. Consent must be obtained to ensure the child or adolescent understands the information and can make an informed

decision to be considered valid. The consent must also be given voluntarily, without any external pressure or coercion.

In the 1990s, the emphasis of research shifted to the ethical considerations of using children and adolescents as research subjects (Munoko et al., 2020). This shift was motivated by concerns about the potential for exploitation and harm, as well as protecting children's rights and best interests. This research has continued to expand in the 21st century, focusing on the ethical considerations of conducting research with vulnerable populations and the ethical implications of using children and adolescents for research purposes. Moreover, there has been an increased focus on the ethical implications of using technology in research with children and adolescents (Rousell & Cutter-Mackenzie-Knowles, 2020; Thunberg & Arnell, 2022). In addition to the ethical considerations of conducting research with vulnerable populations, the literature has also addressed the ethical implications of conducting research with children and adolescents regarding deception, coercion, incentives, rewards, and punishments. Furthermore, the literature has addressed the ethical implications of using children and adolescents in research regarding the potential for exploitation and harm, as well as the need to protect the rights and interests of the child.

3. Findings via Literature Dataset

When conducting research with children and adolescents, special considerations must be considered. For example, the child or adolescent should be given enough time to consider the information and discuss any questions or concerns with their guardian or parent, and the language and terminology used should be appropriate for their age and level of understanding (Odgers & Jensen, 2020). Researchers should also involve the child or adolescent's guardian or parent in the decision-making process and provide them with any necessary information regarding the research study.

In addition, researchers must ensure that the child or adolescent's rights and autonomy are respected. They must also be given the freedom to leave the study at any time without suffering any consequences, and their privacy and confidentiality must be maintained. Researchers should also make sure that the child or adolescent is aware of any potential risks or benefits associated with participating in the study and that they are aware of any resources available to them if they have any questions or concerns (Oswald et al., 2020).

According to the evidence, four research ethics exist for psychological and clinical studies involving children and teenagers. 1. Respect for autonomy: Researchers should respect the rights and autonomy of children and adolescents,

including their right to decide wisely about participating in research (Pérez-García et al., 2020). 2. Respect for privacy and confidentiality: Researchers should protect the privacy and confidentiality of children and adolescents and ensure their data is kept safe and secure. 3. Respect for vulnerability:

Researchers should consider the vulnerability of children and adolescents and ensure that their research does not cause harm or exploitation (Teixeira-Machado et al., 2022; Boelen et al., 2021). 4. Respect for beneficence: Researchers should make sure that the advantages of their work exceed the risks and that it is done in a way that is best for the child or adolescent subjects.

Confidentiality is an essential ethical consideration for psychological and clinical studies targeting children and adolescents. It is a fundamental ethical principle that ensures participants' privacy, autonomy, and trust. Any information collected about an individual during a study must be kept private and secure. This includes personal details, medical history, test results, and even the fact that a study is taking place. When conducting research with children and adolescents, special attention must be given to confidentiality. In order to ensure that participants feel safe and secure, researchers must be aware of the potential risks associated with sharing confidential information. This includes the risk of identity theft and potential harm to participants if their information is disclosed (Li & Liu, 2021). It is important to note that confidentiality must be maintained even after the study has ended.

In order to protect participant confidentiality, researchers must take several steps. These include obtaining informed consent from the participant or their parent/guardian, using secure data storage systems, and only sharing information with those who need to know. Additionally, researchers must be aware of the applicable laws and regulations that govern the disclosure of confidential information (Clayton et al., 2019).

Finally, risk assessment is an essential ethical consideration for psychological and clinical studies targeting children and adolescents. Risk assessment evaluates potential risks associated with a proposed research project and determines strategies to reduce or mitigate those risks. Risk assessment involves determining the level of risk posed by the research, such as physical, psychological, or social risks, and then taking steps to reduce or eliminate those risks. For example, in a study involving children and adolescents, the researchers may need to consider the potential risks associated with the study, such as the potential for physical harm, psychological distress, or social stigma (Gong et al., 2020). The researchers may minimize or eliminate these risks by providing informed consent, establishing clear data collection and storage procedures, and ensuring participants' safety. In addition, the researchers may need to consider the potential risks the study poses to

the research participants' families, friends, and communities. By carefully assessing the risks associated with a research project involving children and adolescents, researchers can ensure that the research is conducted ethically and responsibly.

International and national codes of ethics are essential for setting out the framework for ethical conduct in research. They include the Declaration of Helsinki, and the Belmont Report, which outlines ethical principles for research in the social sciences. National codes of ethics, such as those of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the American Psychological Association (APA), provide more detailed guidance on research ethics and are tailored to the specific research context.

Informed permission is required for medical research, and vulnerable people like children and teenagers are also protected. These ethical guidelines are outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki. Respect for people, beneficence, and justice are the three central ethical principles for study involving human subjects that are outlined in the Belmont Report. Respect for people requires that participants—including children and adolescents—be treated with dignity and that participants' informed consent be obtained by researchers. (Murdoch et al., 2023). Beneficence requires researchers to maximize benefits and minimize harm to participants. Finally, justice requires that researchers ensure that participants are selected for research and that risks and benefits are equally distributed.

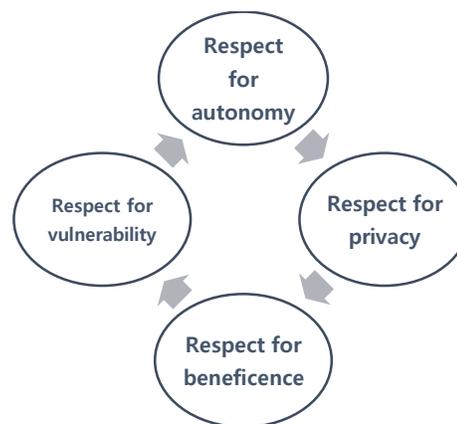


Figure 1: Four Aspects of the Findings

The NIH and the APA provide detailed ethical guidelines for research involving children and adolescents. The NIH has specific guidance on ethical issues related to research involving children, including the need for adequate information for parents and children about the research, the

need for researchers to obtain informed consent from children and parents, the importance of respect for the autonomy of children and adolescents, and the need for research protocols to minimize risks and maximize benefits for participants (Fusar-Poli et al., 2021; Harriss et al., 2019). The APA also guides how researchers should conduct research with children and adolescents, including ethical considerations related to informed consent, confidentiality, and risk assessment.

4. Conclusions

It Research ethics in psychological research targeting children and adolescents has implications for practitioners working with this population. Practitioners must be aware of the ethical issues related to research involving children and take action to ensure that the research is carried out with participants' respect in mind. Practitioners should also ensure they are familiar with the relevant ethical guidelines and regulations regarding research with minors. This includes understanding the regulations and requirements for obtaining informed consent from minors and this population's exceptional privacy and security considerations. Practitioners should also be aware of the potential risks associated with research with minors. They should ensure that the research is conducted in a manner that is beneficial to the minors' well-being.

Regulatory bodies are organizations or agencies responsible for monitoring, assessing and enforcing ethical standards in research. These organizations create and apply regulations that aim to protect the rights of those involved in the research, ensure the safety of research participants and ensure the integrity of the research. Examples of regulatory bodies in the field of psychology and clinical studies targeting children and adolescents include the American Psychological Association (APA), the World Health Organization (WHO), the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and local government departments. Each organization has its code of ethics and rules and regulations for conducting research. These regulations are designed to protect the rights of the child or adolescent participant, to ensure that their best interests are considered, to ensure that the research is conducted safely and ethically, and to ensure that the participants and the research method are not harmed during the course of the study.

The APA, for example, has an extensive set of ethical principles and guidelines for conducting research with children and adolescents. These guidelines cover informed consent, confidentiality, risk assessment, parental permission, research design and data protection. The WHO has an International Code of Ethics for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects, which includes specific

provisions for protecting children and adolescents participating in research (Harriss et al., 2019). The ECHR also ensures that research involving children and adolescents is conducted in a way that considers their best interests and rights. Local government departments also have regulations and guidelines for conducting research with children and adolescents, which may differ from country to country.

One potential ethical issue for psychological and clinical studies targeting children and adolescents is the risk of psychological harm. Research that involves study participants at a young age can pose risks to the participants' mental health, mainly when the research includes sensitive topics or intrusive procedures (Punukollu & Marques, 2019). Therefore, it is essential to ensure that research protocols are designed and implemented to minimize the risk of psychological harm. Another potential ethical issue is the potential for coercion or undue influence. Studies involving children and adolescents may involve their parents or other adults in positions of power. It is crucial to ensure that participants make decisions of their own free will and are not unduly influenced (van IJzendoorn et al., 2020). Finally, it is vital to consider the potential for exploitation. Studies involving children and adolescents should be designed in such a way that they are beneficial to the participants and not exploitative of them. It is crucial to consider the potential for financial or social exploitation and the exploitation of the participants' data.

Future study methods should concentrate on reducing risks to participants and ensuring that research is conducted ethically. This includes ensuring that participants completely understand the risks, benefits, and purpose of the study, as well as their rights and responsibilities. Additionally, researchers should consider the age and maturity of participants and the potential for coercion or manipulation of the data.

5. Limitations of the Study

One of the main limitations of research focusing on ethics in the study of minors is the need for more empirical evidence regarding the efficacy of various ethical protocols. While there is abundant literature on the ethical considerations of research with minors, little research evaluates the effectiveness of such protocols (Radez et al., 2021). Determining the most effective ways to ensure ethical research practices takes time and effort. Another area for improvement of research on ethics in the study of minors is the difficulty in accessing minors as research participants. Due to the sensitive nature of research involving minors, obtaining informed consent from minors and their legal guardians can be difficult. Additionally, due to the need for

privacy and confidentiality when conducting research with minors, it can be challenging to reach enough research participants to obtain sufficient data (Hosokawa & Katsura, 2019).

To ensure ethical practices, researchers should use various methods to increase transparency in the research process, such as providing detailed information about the study protocol and potential risks to participants. Additionally, researchers should consider using age-appropriate language, allowing for parental involvement and informed consent, and avoiding deception or manipulation. Finally, researchers should seek to build trust with the participants and their families. This can be done by clearly communicating the research goals, potential risks, and benefits. Additionally, researchers should strive to build relationships with the participants and their families, providing support and guidance throughout the research process (Kang & Hwang, 2020).

In conclusion, research ethics are essential for protecting children and adolescents when conducting psychological and clinical studies. Ethical considerations must include informed consent, confidentiality, and risk assessment. International and national codes of ethics and regulatory bodies provide guidelines for research ethics. Despite these efforts, ethical issues may still arise in research targeting children and adolescents. In order to address these issues, researchers must take steps to ensure that the rights and interests of participants are respected throughout the research process. Furthermore, researchers must know the potential for new ethical issues as research techniques and approaches evolve.

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